

HANDBOOK FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE
HONORS INDEPENDENT STUDY/CAPSTONE PROJECT

PEAKE HONORS PROGRAM
THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA'S
COLLEGE AT WISE

JANUARY 2009

OVERVIEW

The Capstone Project is to be completed in the last semester before the student's graduation. The student must inform the Director of the Peake Honors Program of his/her intention to begin the Capstone Project the semester preceding so that an Honors Independent study can be added to the upcoming semester schedule. Within the first two weeks of the final semester, the student should submit a Project Proposal to the Director, who will then present it to the Honors Committee for approval. The Capstone Project will then be completed under the guidance of two faculty advisors (one primary and one secondary). The finished product is to be a 20 page paper, a shorter version of which is to be presented orally at an end-of-the-semester Honors colloquium and defended before the Honors Committee.

CHOOSING AND WORKING WITH ADVISORS

The Capstone Project must be interdisciplinary in scope. Thus, a student with a history major might wish to do a project that deals with literary trends of a particular historical period (e.g., the Restoration, the French Revolution). In such a case, the student could have a primary advisor from history and a secondary advisor from English. The primary advisor should be not only a person quite knowledgeable about the area the student wishes to explore but also one with whom the student has a reasonably good working relationship. In some cases, a student may know the general topic he or she wishes to explore and will search for an advisor who is an expert on that topic; in other cases, the student may wish to work with a particular advisor, whatever the topic, and will ask that person for guidance in selection a specific topic. Many faculty members, understandably, will not take on the direction of the Capstone Project for a student who they have not had in class or have not directed in previous independent study.

Students must stay in close contact with their primary advisor during the research and writing process. No more than two weeks should pass without contact between a student and advisor—in person or by email—regarding progress on the Capstone Project. Even if students have nothing to “show” the advisor as far as written work is concerned, they should at least tell the advisor what they are reading, what kinds of problems (if any) they are encountering, etc. The advisor is not (or should not be) a person who comments occasionally and signs off on a finished project but a person who truly advises and directs the student's work. That person can provide the student with valuable resources can sometimes lend books, can serve as a sounding board for ideas, can challenge the students in numerous ways, and can comment on subject matter, research methods, writing style, organization, and any other aspect of the Capstone Project. In short, students should always keep in mind that independent study is understood to be GUIDED independent study. Students who have not stayed in touch with the advisor throughout the various stages of the process should not be surprised if the advisor is reluctant to approve the resulting product.

The secondary advisor must be from a different academic discipline than the primary advisor. He/she will not be as involved in the week to week progress of the project, but

should nonetheless read drafts and offer suggestions on the portions of the project that are germane to his or her field. The secondary advisor should be looked upon as a valuable resource to help enrich the project and make it truly interdisciplinary.

THE CAPSTONE PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Capstone Project Proposal is a formal document which sets forth the parameters of the intended work. It is comprised of a signed form and an attached description of the project. Both sections should be typed neatly and free of grammatical errors. A copy of the form is included later in this handbook. The accompanying description should be a 1 – 1 ½ page document that reflects a carefully thought-out approach to the subject with sufficient elaboration to enable the advisor and the Honors Director to know just what it is the student intends to do. In particular, it should succinctly explain what the student intends to investigate, how he/she will go about investigating it, and what the benefit/importance of conducting such an investigation is. Sample proposals are available from the Program Director.

PAPER SPECIFICATIONS

1. Margins: One inch all around.
2. Copies: Once the final paper has been approved by the primary and secondary advisors, the student should submit both an electronic copy and a hard copy of the paper (along with the signed approval page) to the Director.
3. Title and approval page: Both copies must contain a title page and approval page. Models of each are included in this handbook. The approval page must be signed by the appropriate persons (project advisors and Director).
4. Other Front Matter: If included, other front matter should be in the following order:
 1. Title Page
 2. Approval Page
 3. Table of Contents (if necessary)
 4. Preface or Acknowledgements (if any)
 5. List of Figures (if any)
 6. List of Illustrations (if any)
 7. List of Tables (if any)
5. Pagination: Please ensure that all pages are numbered and in the right order. All front matter should be given lower-case Roman numerals; Arabic numbers begin with the first page of the paper itself, including the Introduction. The title page is considered to be page one of the front

matter, but the numeral itself is not placed on the page. The approval page is given the number “ii”. Page numbers for front matter are normally centered at the bottom of the page; page numbers for the body of the text start begin with “1” and are placed in the top right margin.

6. Style Guide: Please use the style guide (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) appropriate for your discipline re: spacing, footnote form, bibliography, etc. The guidelines above, however, take precedence over the style guides.
7. Figures: (illustrations, tables, charts, photographs, maps, etc) should be listed at the outset, referred to in the text before they appear, and captioned.

THE ORAL DEFENSE

The oral defense is required of all students who complete the Capstone Project. The Honors committee is generally made up of four persons and the Director. The oral defense will be held toward the end of the semester. The student should remember, however, that the defense cannot take place unless the committee members have received a copy of the Capstone Project at least a week prior to the anticipated defense date. In short, the student should not expect to give the manuscript to the committee on Tuesday afternoon before a Friday morning oral defense! Moreover, the student should not give their advisor and the Honors committee members a copy of the Project at the same time; the Honors committee members should receive their copies only after the advisor has indicated that the project is ready to be defended.

The defense itself is usually held in a classroom. At the defense, the student normally presents a ~20 minute overview of the project (including its purpose, method, and results) Honors committee members then ask questions, in what turns out to be a relatively informal and lively exchange of ideas, lasting about 15 minutes. A student passes with no more than one negative vote. If the student passes the oral defense, he/she will then graduate “with College Honors.”

CHECK-OFF LIST FOR COMPLETING

Capstone Project

- Research possible topics
- Decide on a topic
- Choose your advisors
- Write Capstone Project proposal and submit it to the Director of the Peake Honors Program (within first 2 weeks of semester)
- Begin background reading
- Meet with project advisor frequently
- Complete research
- Write first draft and submit it to project advisor(s)
- Make any changes you and your advisor(s) agree upon (submitting subsequent drafts if necessary)
- Submit final draft to primary and secondary advisors
- With your advisors' approval, submit final paper to the Honors Director (at least one week prior to Defense)
- Oral Presentation and Defense

Peake Honors Program

- 3 Honors Seminars
- 8 Honors Events
- 1 Honors Independent Study/ Capstone Project
- Cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher

EXHIBIT 1

Honors Capstone Proposal

Date: _____

1. Name: _____

2. Local address: _____ Phone No.: _____
_____ I.D. #: _____

3. Major: _____

Minor: _____

4. Capstone Project Proposal

a. Title: _____

b. Description (please attach 1 -1 ½ page description of proposed project)

5. Faculty Advisor Approval

I agree to direct the Honors Project as described above.

Signature Title Department Date

I agree to serve as the Secondary Advisor of the Project as described above.

Signature Title Department Date

6. Director of the Peake Honors Program Approval

Signature Date

EXHIBIT 2

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

TITLE
(all caps)

A Capstone Project submitted to the
Peake Honors Program of the University of Virginia's College at Wise
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for College Honors

By

Student's Name

May, 2009

(i.e., month of student's graduation, not the month the written paper was submitted)

EXHIBIT 3

SAMPLE APPROVAL PAGE

Title of Project

Student's Name

Current Date

Approved by

_____, Primary Advisor

_____, Secondary Advisor

_____, Director, Peake Honors Program

EXHIBIT 4

SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....page #

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....

LIST OF TABLES.....

CHAPTERS

 I. ACTUAL TITLE OF CHAPTER (E.G., INTRODUCTION).....

 II. ACTUAL TITLE OF CHAPER (E.G., REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE)...

 III. ACTUAL TITLE OF CHAPTER (E.G., METHODS).....

 IV. ACTUAL TITLE OF CHAPTER.....

 V. ACTUAL TITLE OF CHAPTER.....

BIBLIOGRAPHY/NOTES/WORKS CITED.....