GUIDELINES FOR HONORS THESES BASED ON CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Adapting a capstone project to fit the Honors thesis requirement often proves appropriate in disciplines where research or creative exploration results in a performance, exhibit, or object you create. Writing this type of thesis enables you to demonstrate your knowledge of the learning and methods of your discipline while describing the original contribution you have made to your field.

Nevertheless, for a capstone project to qualify as the basis of an Honors thesis, the performance or product you create should be aimed at a broader audience than BYU and should have more than local applicability. In addition, you must document the experience of creating your project by writing a text in thesis format that contains the following sections:

I. Purpose. Tell where the idea for your project originated, why you chose this topic, and how the project itself is a suitable culminating experience for your undergraduate education.

II. Background and Significance. Explain the context of your project based on historical, social, cultural, political, and/or personal significance. Usually a context is created by a brief review of literature or previous work related to your particular project. This will undoubtedly require some library research to learn what others have already done in the field. Then show how your work will add to, differ from, or relate to the work previously done.

III. Methods or Procedures. Spell out the steps you took to produce the objects or performance required for your capstone project. Items detailed in this section might include a log of the hours you spent on the project, rehearsal schedules, production processes and schedules, needs assessments, usability tests, quality control procedures, as well as IRB approval and ORCA reports, if applicable.

IV. Presentation of Project. Include sketches, diagrams, photos, or even a CD or DVD to record the performance, the display, or the object created. Add narrative describing and analyzing the specific components of the project.

V. Overall Analysis of Project Results. Evaluate your project as a whole. What aspects of your project went well? What didn’t work? What would you do differently if you could do it all again? What advice would you give a student doing a similar project a year from now? Where will you go from here?

VI. Bibliography. List the books, articles, and other sources you read to review the literature related to your project. Use the documentation style that is standard for your discipline.

No page requirement exists for any Honors thesis, but it is expected that thoughtful attention will focus on each of these outlined sections. Although presenting your capstone project in thesis format does require extra work, the resulting bound thesis should prove a significant added accomplishment that will be worth your effort and help you qualify to graduate with University Honors.