

# Honors Capstone Guide

2025-2026 Academic Year



**LSU**

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**Roger Hadfield  
Ogden Honors College**

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## **Senior Honors Distinction Requirements**

### *College Honors*

Noted on both the diploma and the LSU transcript, College Honors is the highest undergraduate distinction of the Ogden Honors College and of LSU. To graduate with College Honors, a student must meet the following requirements:

- At least 32 hours of Honors classes as follows:
  - A minimum of six hours of HNRS course work
  - 12 hours at 3000+ level in the major (including capstone hours), following upper division departmental honors programs, where they exist
- Honors Capstone, following capstone guidelines
- 3.5 GPA in cumulative, LSU, and Honors course work

College Honors recipients receive a bachelor's hood as well as a white cord at the Ogden Honors College Graduation Ceremony.

### *Upper Division Honors Distinction*

Noted on their LSU transcript, Upper Division Honors Distinction requires the following accomplishments:

- 12 hours of honors courses in the major at the 3000 level or above, including three to six hours of capstone or project hours, following Upper Division guidelines
- Honors Capstone, following capstone guidelines
- 3.5 GPA in both cumulative and LSU course work, and for all Honors courses used in the student's Upper Division Program

Upper Division Honors Distinction recipients receive a white cord at the Ogden Honors College Graduation Ceremony.

### *Capstone Honors*

Honors students in Good Standing may pursue a capstone-only track with the commitment of a faculty member to serve as Capstone Director. The Honors College recognizes students graduating with Capstone Honors at the Ogden Honors College Graduation Ceremony.

Capstone Honors recipients receive a silver cord at the Ogden Honors College Graduation Ceremony.

## **Academic Requirements: Honors Minors**

All students must be in good standing in the OHC to request enrollment in a minor. An honors student may receive credit for only one minor of the college.

### *Honors Minor*

A student in the Ogden Honors College must complete the following 18 hours to graduate with a minor in Honors:

- 3 hours of HNRS 1010 Honors Core Experiences
- 2 of the following courses (6 hours): HNRS 2000 Critical Analysis; either HNRS 2009 Physical Science for Citizens or HNRS 2010 Life Science for Citizens; HNRS 2100 The Great Conversations
- 9 additional hours as HNRS, departmental honors, or honors option. Six semester hours must be in courses at the 3000 level or above.

Students must maintain good standing in the Ogden Honors College and a 3.0 gpa in the courses used to satisfy the minor.

### *Honors Research Minor*

A student in the Ogden Honors College must complete the following 27 hours to graduate with a minor in Honors Research:

- 3 hours of HNRS 1010 Honors Core Experiences
- 2 of the following courses (6 hours): HNRS 2000 Critical Analysis; either HNRS 2009 Physical Science for Citizens or HNRS 2010 Life Science for Citizens; HNRS 2100 The Great Conversations
- Capstone sequence (9 hours): HNRS 3800 Capstone Reading and Research Methods; HNRS 3900 Capstone Development and Writing; HNRS 4000 Capstone
- 9 additional hours as HNRS, departmental honors, or honors option. Six semester hours must be in courses at the 3000 level or above.

Students must maintain good standing in the Ogden Honors College and a 3.0 gpa in the courses used to satisfy the minor.

### *Louisiana Service and Leadership (LASAL) Minor\**

A student in the Ogden Honors College must complete the following 21 hours to graduate with a minor in Louisiana Service and Leadership (LASAL):

- 3 hours of HNRS 1010 Honors Core Experiences
- 2 of the following courses (6 hours): HNRS 2000 Critical Analysis; either HNRS 2009 Physical Science for Citizens or HNRS 2010 Life Science for Citizens; HNRS 2100 The Great Conversations
- HNRS 2015 The State of Louisiana; POLI 2056 Government of Louisiana; and HIST 3071 Louisiana History (9 total hours)
- 1 of the following 2 courses (3 hours): HNRS 3010 Leaders and Scholarship; HNRS 3100 Internships, Field Work, Off-Campus Programs

Honors students must have the permission of the Ogden Honors College to enroll in the LASAL minor. Students must maintain good standing in the Ogden Honors College and a 3.0 gpa in the courses used to satisfy the minor.

### *Louisiana Service and Leadership (LASAL) Research Minor\**

A student in the Ogden Honors College must complete the following 30 hours to graduate with a minor in Louisiana Service and Leadership (LASAL) Research:

- 3 hours of HNRS 1010 Honors Core Experiences
- 2 of the following courses (6 hours): HNRS 2000 Critical Analysis; either HNRS 2009 Physical Science for Citizens or HNRS 2010 Life Science for Citizens; HNRS 2100 The Great Conversations
- HNRS 2015 The State of Louisiana; POLI 2056 Government of Louisiana; and HIST 3071 Louisiana History (9 total hours)
- 1 of the following 2 courses (3 hours): HNRS 3010 Leaders and Scholarship; HNRS 3100 Internships, Field Work, Off-Campus Programs
- Capstone sequence (9 hours): HNRS 3800 Capstone Reading and Research Methods; HNRS 3900 Capstone Development and Writing; HNRS 4000 Capstone

Honors students must have the permission of the Ogden Honors College to enroll in the LASAL Research minor. Students must maintain good standing in the Ogden Honors College and a 3.0 gpa in the courses used to satisfy the minor.

\* For students interested in pursuing the LASAL Minor and LASAL Research Minor, admission is selective. Students must attend an informational meeting, submit an application, and undertake an interview.

## **Upper Division Honors Coursework**

### *Declaration of Intent*

When pursuing Upper Division Honors Distinction or College Honors, a student first declares their intention to participate in the Upper Division Program. This declaration informs the College and enables the Upper Division Advisor to provide information that is relevant to your plans at important stages of the capstone process. Please take note of the following:

- The Upper Division Declaration Form is available at <https://ohportal.lsu.edu>.
- Students should declare their intention by the end of the sophomore spring semester. We also suggest that students schedule an advising session with the Honors College Upper Division Academic Advisor upon declaration.
- College of Science students must also apply through their major department and college.
- Upper Division Honors Programs vary by major. Each student needs to understand the requirements of that major department prior to beginning the program.

### *Honors Option*

The Honors Option converts a standard 3000/4000 level course into an Honors course. The Honors Option is a crucial component of nearly all Upper Division Programs. Important aspects to note about the Honors Option:

- Honors Options can be initiated and managed at <https://ohportal.lsu.edu>.
- The Honors Option includes an independent, Honors-level component (a paper, presentation, or project, for example), accomplished in addition to the standard coursework.
- The Honors Option Agreement is a contract between student and professor, with terms designed and agreed upon by both parties; the student must initiate the Honors Option process.
- The Honors Option Agreement must be established with the Honors College by the fourteenth class day of the semester in which the course is taken. This is typically the third week of class in a semester. Summer Honors Option Agreements should be approved by the fifth class day, and intersession Honors Option Agreements must be approved by the second class day.
- Verification by the faculty member of the fulfillment of an Honors Option Agreement is due by the grade reporting deadline of the semester.

## *Capstone Courses*

We recommend that students enroll in capstone coursework for two semesters. Typically, this enrollment spans the fall and spring of the senior year. Some Upper Division Programs have designated courses for capstone work. Students in these programs should register for the recommended capstone course and, if it is not an Honors course, arrange an Honors Option Agreement to earn Honors credit. Students whose programs do not require a specific course for capstone enrollment may enroll in HNRS 4000. **HNRS 4000 is graded for pass/fail credit.**

All students planning to enroll in capstone coursework must complete the Honors College **Capstone Enrollment Form**, which is available at <https://ohportal.lsu.edu>. For those students working on their capstone in HNRS 4000, the Capstone Enrollment Form will also serve as the official schedule request. Some departments may require additional paperwork for enrollment in their own capstone courses, which are designated in departmental Upper Division Programs. Students are responsible for submitting all paperwork to their department and the Honors College by the appropriate deadline.

## **Capstone Rules and Regulations**

### *Expectations for an Honors Capstone*

The Honors Capstone Project should be appropriate, in both quality and content, to the conventions of its field of study. Students should work closely with their director, as well as their committee members, to ensure this is the case in conduct of research and in terms of the style and format of the resulting documentation. The Honors College expects a capstone that displays originality and depth of research, based on a solid foundation of study in the major, with a clear and cohesive presentation in its final form.

Data and results presented should be the work of the student author. It is acceptable to include data, results, or figures from other researchers or publications that are needed to support or place the student's work in context, but such additions should be kept to a minimum and should be clearly indicated and attributed in the figure legends and text. Published first author scientific articles by the capstone author are allowable as independent chapters, but as in M.S. theses or Ph.D. dissertations, these should be clearly indicated as such. Published articles where the capstone author is not first author should typically be rewritten to focus on the specific accomplishments of the capstone author.



## *Capstone Formats*

**Scholarly Paper** – May apply to all disciplines. A scholarly paper is based on original research and includes a consideration of secondary sources. Students will formulate an original question concerning his/her discipline and will investigate and analyze this question through a consideration of original and secondary sources. The resulting analysis should make a creative contribution to the relevant literature.

**Research Paper** – Applies to disciplines in which students conduct research that produces original data, including the physical, biological, or social sciences. The research paper is based on data from experiments, surveys, or scholarly research and includes an examination of relevant literature. It may include laboratory or field work.

**Business Plan** – Applies to disciplines in which the student is trained to work in a business setting and may include disciplines outside the College of Business with the permission of the major department. The student conceptualizes a business and conducts relevant research to formulate a plan for marketing, finance, and implementation.

**Field Report** – This format may be used by students engaged in full-time experiential requirements in the major, such as those required by the College of Education. The capstone should place the experience in the context of discipline specific literature.

**Portfolio** – This format applies primarily to students in the arts. It includes a formal compilation of the student's artistic work as well as a written explanation of the work and relevant literature.

**Performance** – Students primarily in music and the dramatic arts may base their capstone on a presentation of creative artistry. This format will also include a written explanation of the work and relevant literature.

**Design Project** – Students in engineering will work in this format. The design project includes an analysis of a physical problem, the formulation of a design solution, and the production of the design. The capstone includes a written explanation of the work and the relevant literature.

## *Choosing a Capstone Topic*

Determining an appropriate capstone topic involves collaboration between professor and student. Either one may first present an idea for a topic, or several topics may be considered, but in the end the chosen capstone topic should match up with the student's interest, the professor's expertise, and the degree being sought. The project can incorporate aspects of other fields, particularly if it has an interdisciplinary focus by design. A few important points to keep in mind are:

- The capstone must be within the student's major.
- The scope of the project should be limited to a manageable breadth.
- A student already assisting a professor in research will likely find a topic within that specialized area.
- Independent study courses can allow for the exploration of a topic prior to capstone enrollment.
- Students may develop a capstone topic from internships they conduct in their area.

## *Research Oversight and IRB (for Research with Human Subjects)*

The primary goal of the [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB) is to ensure the safety and welfare of human subjects in research and scholarly projects. The IRB is responsible for ensuring compliance with the exacting federal requirements that govern ALL research with human subjects (whether funded externally or not) unless they meet specific criteria for exemption. It is the IRB's goal to assist faculty to conduct successful studies with human subjects, by helping them meet the criteria for IRB approval. The IRB also seeks to limit liability for LSU as a by-product of protecting subjects. All projects must be submitted to the IRB Office for approval or exemption using standard forms and guidelines available on request. **In no event may a project with human subjects begin before written exemption or written IRB approval is received.**

Visit the [Institutional Review Board website](#) to learn more about research involving human subjects.

## *Capstone Director*

The Capstone Director serves as the student's guide to research methods, information resources, time management, and document style. The Capstone Director also serves as the Defense Committee chair.

A student should secure a commitment with a potential Capstone Director no later than the junior year. The professor might be met in a number of ways, such as through HNRS special-topic seminars, Honors and upper-level major courses, research assistantships, or research events. Students are also encouraged to learn about professors' research activities via departmental web pages, professional journals, or LSU publications such as "LSU Research." The director should agree to serve as the Capstone Director by March of the junior spring semester, at which time the Capstone Enrollment Form may first be turned in for the following fall semester.

The capstone director must be:

- Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor\*
- Faculty within the student's major department\*
- Active in the semester(s) of enrollment (not away on a sabbatical or visiting professorship)

*\*Any exception to these rules requires written permission from the student's major department's chair as well as the Honors Dean.*

## *Capstone Committee*

The capstone committee, the body that reviews the completed capstone prior to the defense and attends the defense, consists of:

- 1) The Capstone Director, who acts as the committee chair.
- 2) One additional full-time faculty member within the student's major department.
- 3) A third full-time faculty member drawn from outside of the major department.

Only the Capstone Director is required to hold professorial rank, but committee members must be members of the faculty. Graduate students and staff members may not serve on capstone committees. Additional committee members are acceptable but should be kept to a minimum and appropriately contribute to the project. The names and departments of all of the committee members should be submitted to the Upper Division Advisor via an online submission form no more than two weeks after the fourteenth day of class in the final semester of capstone enrollment.

## *Capstone Defense*

Students must defend their Honors Capstone before the capstone committee. The student should expect to make a presentation of the capstone research to the committee, followed by a series of questions and possible suggestions for revision. Please note the following:

- It is the student's responsibility to coordinate the date, time, and location of the defense (including notifying the capstone committee and the Honors College, as well as securing the facility).
- Each committee member should be provided with a final draft of the capstone at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense.
- The defense should occur no less than three weeks prior to the last day of classes to allow sufficient time to incorporate any revisions.
- Capstone Directors will receive the final **Capstone Approval Form** from the Upper Division Advisor in advance of the Defense. This form serves as the official verification of completion for the Honors Capstone. Directors must send this form back to the Upper Division Advisor by the last day of class.

**\*\*Students should submit both their Capstone Committee members' information and their Capstone Defense date to the Honors College early in their defending semester at the following link: [Capstone Defense and Committee Registration](#)\*\***

### *The Document: Cover Sheet*

All final capstone documents must use our Capstone Cover Sheet format, which the Upper Division Advisor provides via email to the capstone writers. Once defended, edited, and finalized, the student then submits the approved capstone as a .pdf using our online [Capstone Submission Form](#). Any student with issues in obtaining the cover sheet or in submitting the file should contact the Upper Division Advisor.

### *The Document: Citations*

Honors Theses should follow standard practice rules for master's theses and doctoral dissertations in their specific discipline. **The Capstone Director will be responsible for guiding the student to use citations appropriate for master's theses or scholarly journal submissions in the discipline.**

### *The Outstanding Capstone Award*

Each spring, the Ogden Honors College presents the Outstanding Capstone Award to students at the Honors College Graduation Ceremony. Capstone committees should nominate capstone projects that they deem exceptional for the field. In order to be eligible, both the final copy of the student's capstone and the signed Capstone Approval Form (on which the nomination is made) must be submitted to the Honors College by April 16.

Capstone Directors must supply a letter of support for the student's project to the Honors College by this date. A faculty panel judges all nominated theses from that academic year.



## Submitting the Capstone

After the defense, students should make all necessary revisions to the capstone document. Once complete, the final steps to completing the Honors Capstone are two-fold:

- 1) The *Capstone Approval Form* (see: Capstone Defense) must be returned to the Upper Division Advisor by the Capstone Director.
- 2) The final version of the capstone document must be submitted via the online [Capstone Submission Form](#).

Students defending in the fall semester of 2025 must complete both steps by **Friday, December 4, 2025**.

Students defending in the spring semester of 2026 must complete both steps by **Thursday, April 16, 2026**. *Capstone projects and documents not submitted by this date will not be eligible for the Outstanding Capstone Award.*

## **Resources for Undergraduates Pursuing Research**

### *How to Get Started*

A student can begin participating in research as early as the first year by utilizing student aid awards such as President's Student Aid (PSA) or President's Future Leaders in Research (PFLR). Students also might discover faculty mentors on their own and use independent study courses to allow for guided research opportunities. Getting involved early is particularly valuable for laboratory-based research, given that in such environments it may take some time to develop the skills necessary to complete an independent research project.

The Honors Capstone demands self-reliance and is an independent accomplishment, but the student should also keep in mind that there are many opportunities to receive essential help along the way. The Upper Division Advisor, the entire staff of the Honors College, the Capstone Director and committee members, as well as many university and departmental resources, are ready to assist in ensuring student success. Students should not hesitate to reach out to advisors for assistance when needed.

The LSU Libraries are an invaluable resource for conducting capstone research. LSU librarians are experienced in particular subject areas and are proficient with a wide variety of subject-specific databases. Students can schedule consultations with librarians for assistance at any point in the research process, from sharpening topics to reviewing end-project bibliographies. For more information about the LSU Libraries, visit <https://lib.lsu.edu>.

### *Funding*

There are several ways students can acquire funds to help them complete their capstone research. **All Honors students working on a capstone should apply for a TAF Capstone Research Scholarship, which may provide at least \$500 for the costs associated with research-related travel, materials, and other expenditures.** Students should also investigate scholarships sponsored by their respective colleges and grants related to their area of study.

## **The Honors Capstone: Beyond the Honors College**

The Honors Capstone is a valuable tool for conveying academic ability, commitment, and professionalism. By defending an Honors Capstone, Honors students achieve more than the standard college curriculum. They prove their ability to manage large projects, engage in current issues, and work with a mentor. As a result, Capstone students are competitive candidates for graduate and professional schools and earn the respect of potential employers.

A student should maximize the value of the capstone through practical measures. While impressive as a stand-alone achievement, students should highlight it on resumes or mention it in personal statements and interviews and seek to connect the knowledge gained to real life experiences. Letters of recommendation from capstone directors or committee members can offer real insight and back up your skills and knowledge.

The capstone can be an impetus for contacting persons with expertise in the research area. Professionals and researchers will be interested in your inquiry and the outcomes of your project. Students should not hesitate to reach out or seek introduction to leading experts at research centers, archives, and laboratories. The capstone director may serve as an important link to scholars in their discipline. Research scholarships can pay for travel to visit other institutions. These contacts can provide resources and insight into capstone projects but may also be of assistance in post-graduate career development.

### ***Presenting Capstone Research***

Students are encouraged to share their capstone research with other scholars. Students should consider submitting their work to national conferences and/or submitting to academic journals for publication. Additionally, Honors students may choose to display their capstone research at one of LSU's conferences or symposiums, such as LSU Discover Day. By participating in the larger discussion about one's discipline, Honors students gain valuable experience defining, explaining, and expanding their capstone.

## **A Sample Timeline for Capstone Writers**

The following timeline is meant to assist the capstone writer in the appropriate steps toward successful completion of the undergraduate Honors Capstone within a four-year curriculum. It is geared toward the typical Honors student who defends the capstone in the senior year but builds toward that goal in previous years. Capstone writers in some disciplines and students defending early or extending their time should adjust the semester tasks as needed.

### ***Freshman/Sophomore Years***

Assist a professor in research.

Learn the specific requirements for your major's Upper Division Program.

Declare intent for Upper Division Program by the end of the sophomore year and apply if necessary.

### ***Junior Fall***

Discuss research/capstone plans with professors in your department.

Use the Honors Option for appropriate Upper Division courses in your major.

### ***Junior Spring***

Ask a professor to serve as your Capstone Director.

Go over this Capstone Guide with your Capstone Director.

Submit Capstone Enrollment Form and enroll in your first capstone course for the following fall semester.

Apply for the TAF Capstone Scholarship to support your project.

Participate in a poster session for LSU Discover Day.

### ***Senior Fall***

Discuss fall semester expectations for the capstone project.

Conduct capstone research.

Submit Capstone Enrollment Form and enroll for the second semester of capstone work.

Complete a 'Senior Checkout' advising appointment with the Upper Division Advisor.

Shoot for having a draft of the capstone by the end of the semester.

### ***Senior Spring***

Schedule your defense and submit those details, along with committee member names, to the Honors College by January 31, 2026.

Present capstone research at LSU Discover Day.

Defend your Honors Capstone at least two weeks prior to April 16, 2026. (Any complications for completion by this date should be discussed with the Upper Division Advisor.)

Student must submit a PDF of the capstone to the Honors College using the Capstone Submission Form by April 16, 2026.

Professor must submit the signed Capstone Approval Form to the Honors College by April 16, 2026.

Attend the Honors College Graduation on May 14, 2026.





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**Roger Hadfield**  
**Ogden Honors College**

[www.lsu.edu/honors](http://www.lsu.edu/honors)