

University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Donaghey Scholars Honors Program

Final Project Packet

Updated July 2022

Timeline for the Proposal and Final Project

Proposal

Spring of Sophomore Year or Fall of Junior Year

- Complete Scholars Colloquium II, during which Scholars will complete a workable first draft of their proposal
- Discuss project ideas with prospective advisors and Program Director or Associate Director

Fall Semester of Junior Year

- Secure the faculty committee

Spring Semester of Junior Year

- Proposal due to the DSP in electronic form, as well as a paper copy with committee signatures no later than March 15
- Make any changes recommended by the Donaghey Scholars Program Policy Council

Final Project

Summer and Fall Semesters of Senior Year

- Carry out the project in consultation with faculty committee

Spring Semester of Senior Year

- Write up of final project
- Draft to faculty committee and Director/Associate Director no later than March 1
- Final draft to faculty committee and Director/Associate Director no later than May 1
- Schedule a practice run of your final project presentation with the Director or Associate Director in mid-April
- Oral presentation of the final project during the first week of May
- Turn in the final written component and Final Project Exit Form to the DSP no later than the day before grades are due

Note: December graduates will have slightly different final project deadlines. See the Director for more information.

Guidelines and Process

First Steps

Colloquium II (Spring of Sophomore Year or Fall of Junior Year)

The goal of Colloquium II is two-fold. First, the course encourages Scholars to begin preparing for post-graduation, including goal-setting, resume construction, interview skills, networking, and more. Second, the course guides Scholars through the final project planning and proposal writing process and will end with the Scholar having a working first draft of their proposal to take to their faculty committee.

Identifying a Final Project

Final projects are a major research project or creative work in the Scholar's area of study and are guided by a committee of three experts. Generally, final projects begin as questions or smaller projects in a Scholar's major, but they are not limited to the major as long as the Scholar has the expertise to complete the project. Suggestions to get started include:

1. Consider your interests and experience. What ideas do you have that you need help to develop? If you are really unsure, consider the following: why did you choose your major? What interested you about it? Think about your favorite courses and projects or questions you may have discussed.
2. Talk to the professors in your major that you know best and ask for recommendations. You can often find information about a professor's research interests and experience on the departmental website.
3. Think about what you want to do after you graduate. Are there skills you might need to develop or an experience that could make you more competitive? That can be the foundation for a project.

It is important to start the project as early as possible. Keep in mind that your first idea may not be viable. There are many reasons that this could happen—there may not be an appropriate mentor for you at UA Little Rock, IRB issues may require a major rethinking of the project, the project could require more funding than you have access to, or you may realize when talking with potential advisors and engaging with relevant literature that your idea is already well-trodden ground.

Scope of the Final Project

Given that final projects cover a wide range of disciplines and forms, giving specific and narrow guidelines is an impossible task. What all projects share is substantial original work that engages with existing literature in the field. The scope of this endeavor is large and is often described as larger than a semester project for an upper level course, but smaller than a Masters thesis. The project is usually conducted over two or three semesters and should be roughly equivalent to six credit hours of work.

Majors with Capstone Projects

Certain majors at the university require students to complete a Capstone project, which is often of a similar level of difficulty to the Donaghey Final Project. Scholars are allowed to propose that their Capstone project count as their final project for the program. Because the timing of the Capstone course is often different from the proposed timeline for Donaghey, deadlines for these Scholars will look different. Scholars who will be completing a Capstone as part of a team also have somewhat different guidelines and requirements. However, all Scholars must complete the proposal process, even if it is due at a later date.

Students who intend to use a Capstone project to fulfill the final project requirement should consult the Director/Associate Director to discuss their specific situation during their junior year.

The Final Project Committee

Each Scholar's project will be overseen by a committee of three experts. One committee member, typically the Scholar's primary advisor, will serve as chair. Scholars are encouraged to include at least one member of the committee from outside of their major or area of research. When relevant, committee members can come from outside UA Little Rock.

The Committee Chair The primary advisor serves as a mentor and collaborates with the student on research design and execution. When choosing a primary advisor, Scholars should look for someone with professional expertise in the research area, rather than simply a passing interest. This person should be able to guide the Scholar in the relevant academic context and literature and knowledgeable about the appropriate methodology.

Supporting Committee Members All committee members should have specific expertise that relates to the content area or methodology of the project. While the primary advisor is responsible for general oversight for the whole project, other committee members serve as periodic consultants with a narrower focus.

The primary advisor should be chosen first and should be consulted about additional committee member selections. Once a primary advisor is chosen, the Scholar needs to notify the Associate Director so the advisor can be given relevant information from the Program.

While the committee will guide and evaluate the Scholar's work, this is the Scholar's project and requires a great deal of personal initiative and commitment. It is the responsibility of the Scholar to stay in contact with committee members. Do not forget that they have to approve your final project in order to meet the graduation requirements, so keep them informed about what you are doing and send them drafts as they are ready.

The Final Project Proposal

Format and Contents

The formal proposal explains and justifies the Scholar's final project. The Donaghey Scholars Honors Program Policy Council reviews all proposals and must approve them before work should begin on the project. The Council may ask the Scholar to revise the proposal if clarification is needed or if other concerns exist. As the Policy Council consists of members

with backgrounds in a variety of disciplines, care should be taken to give careful definitions of all terminology and to minimize disciplinary jargon. It should be comprehensible to a reasonably educated person who is not familiar with the field.

The formal proposal is typically 3-5 pages in length and must include seven sections: problem statement; project statement; methodology; committee justification; written component; statement of significance; bibliography.

Problem Statement The goal of this section is to establish the need for the project. Basically, what is the problem or opportunity you are addressing? This could include conflicts within the discipline; a lack of important knowledge; incorrect or missing information; a need to apply knowledge; the absence of a unifying theory; a creative intention; etc. This section should include a limited literature review on the subject.

Project Statement In this section, the Scholar should state clearly what will be done to address the problem, that is, what the project is. This could include bringing new information to an existing problem, expanding on a current area of research, applying models or theories to real-world scenarios, or the exploration of themes in the arts. This section should include some literature that frames the project within larger discussions or academic, intellectual, or artistic debates.

Methodology In this section, the Scholar must explain what they are going to do, how they are going to do it, and a projected timeline. Details are critical, so this section needs to be as specific as possible. Depending on the project, this section could include how data will be gathered and analyzed, what materials may be needed, or the stages of artistic exploration or development. The thoroughness of the methodology plays an important role in convincing the Policy Council that the Scholar both knows what the project entails and will be able to do it.

Committee Justification In this section, the Scholar should explain why each of these people were chosen for the committee. All of the committee members should have expertise that is relevant to the proposed project. For each committee member, this should include their title and affiliation, as well as 1-2 sentences explaining what the person brings to the committee and in what way they can advise or evaluate.

Written Component In this section, the Scholar should explain what the written final project will look like. For some research projects it may take the format of an academic journal article. Creative writing, literary analysis, or ethnographic projects may be much longer. Websites and other mixed media products may be a part of this written component. Artistic projects may be in the form of performances of gallery shows with artist notes or creative statements. All projects must include a reflective essay that discusses the project, the decisions made, and what the Scholar learned through the process. The Scholar should discuss with their committee the expectations for the written component.

Significance The Scholar should explain why the completed work will be important and how it will contribute to the academic discipline, community, or the individual Scholar.

Bibliography The proposal should include a bibliography of the relevant literature. While this does not have to be exhaustive, it should indicate that the Scholar has spent time with the literature and understands the academic or creative framework for the project.

The Final Product

Independent Study Credit

The final project requires a great deal of time and energy. Although not required, some Scholars find it useful to carry out their project with an Independent Study through their major department.

The First Draft (Due 3/15 of Junior Year)

The goal of the draft is to allow committee members to provide feedback and suggestions, as well as to permit the Scholar time to reflect upon and revise their project. The written component will be close to its final form, although organizational structure, analyses, and conclusions may not be fully intellectually formed. It is critical that all committee members have the opportunity to evaluate the draft and provide feedback, as they may be unwilling to sign off on the final version otherwise.

The Oral Presentation (During the Finals Period)

An oral presentation to the Donaghey Scholars Program directors and the Scholar's committee is required for all final projects and members of the public may be invited to attend. Each Scholar is allotted thirty minutes for their presentations. Generally, presentations last 15 minutes, leaving the remaining time for questions. The questions may often be pointed and require a defense of the project, but approval of the project does not depend on the student's performance in the presentation. As a formal event, professional attire is recommended. Scholars are encouraged to publicize their presentations within their departments/majors by posting flyers or email. Families and other supporters are also welcome to attend.

Turning it in (Due by the last day of Finals)

Scholars must email their final project in PDF form to dsp@ualr.edu no later than the last day of finals in the semester they plan to graduate. This should include the written paper and any other supporting materials. These materials should be carefully proofread and will be available for future Scholars to read.

Committee members can either sign the attached Final Project Exit Form or can email their approval of the project to the Associate Director of the program by the same date.

Donaghey Scholars Program Final Project:

Proposal Approval Form

Project Title: _____

Scholar: _____

Scholar: List below the members of your final project committee.

Primary Advisor: _____

Department _____

Second Committee Member: _____

Department _____

Third Committee Member: _____

Department _____

Committee Members: Your signatures below indicate that you have read the attached final project proposal, that you understand what is involved in advising the Scholar during the process, and that you approve of the topic, the intent, and the approach of the project as described.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Donaghey Scholars Program

Final Project Exit Form

Scholar _____

Title of Project _____

The Scholar named above has completed a final project in fulfillment of the requirements of the Donaghey Scholars Program. This project meets our standards for scholarly work.

Primary Advisor: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Committee Member: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Committee Member: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____