The Honors in Practice (HIP) Handbook offers students, faculty mentors, Departmental Honors Advisors, and academic advisors clear guidelines about the types and requirements of HIP work, including some HIP experiences structured by the Honors Program and others structured with mentoring agreements between students and their faculty mentors. Students can begin HIP work at any time; most students complete this work during their second and third years.

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Forms available at http://honors.usu.edu: Honors Mentoring Agreement Proposal, Honors Mentoring Agreement Completion, and Honors Research and Study Abroad Fund Application
Honors in Practice: What, When, and Why?

WHAT?
Honors in Practice (HIP) allows students to apply their academic knowledge beyond the walls of the classroom. HIP work therefore cannot be required for a course, with some guided exceptions (see Honors Excel (completing graduate coursework as an undergraduate), internships, and study abroad). Students upload most HIP work in the Honors Canvas Course, where they can also track their total Honors points and communicate with Honors staff (contact information for Departmental Honors Advisors is available on the Honors website). The Canvas course also offers modules that explain each type of HIP work and viewable examples of some outstanding Honors student HIP work.

Honors offers various pathways toward earning the **recommended NINE Honors points for HIP**, including:

- Honors Book Labs (1 point each)
- Honors Leadership Academy (3 points)
- Honors Student Leadership (4.5 points total; maximum of 3 points/year)
- Honors Alumni Mentoring Programs (4.5 points total; maximum of 3 points/year)
- Honors Mentoring Agreements between students and faculty (3 points per agreement)

WHEN?
Students can begin HIP work as early as their first year; most students complete these projects during their second and third years. Current/transfer students admitted after their first year may be awarded up to nine Honors points upon admission for past experiential learning that meets HIP requirements, including research, creative work, and community-engagement activities. Students can visit the Honors Canvas course and start exploring the HIP modules as soon as they are ready to begin.

WHY?
Honors students are curious, engaged, and creative thinkers who are willing to take some intellectual risks. They often excel in the classroom, but they grow most when they take charge of their own educational experiences and challenge themselves to step outside their comfort zones. The HIP part of the Honors curriculum dares students to think imaginatively and practically about the value of experiential learning through research, creative projects, community engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration. This work often lays the foundation for both Honors capstone projects and future professional paths by guiding students as they learn to take responsibility for their own learning and to communicate its value to others. Keep in mind that because most HIP work is not graded, it creates a safe space for intellectual experimentation as students learn and grow.

HIP structures and rewards this work with Honors points. In most cases, students earn points by submitting in the Honors Canvas course a final product and a written reflection about the value of the HIP experience. Honors recommends that students take advantage of the option to create a portfolio of Honors work, using the Portfolium option in Canvas (find out more about Portfolium). HIP final products contribute to this professional portfolio, giving students a concrete set of work examples that they can share with future employers or graduate programs. Similarly, the final reflections help build a clear narrative about the value of the Honors undergraduate experience for both students and future employers and/or graduate programs. While USU offers a world-class education to all students, the opportunity to create a portfolio and articulate the value of each step in that education prepares Honors Aggies exceptionally well to take their next strides.
General Requirements for Honors in Practice

HIP work asks students to make their academic knowledge real and tangible outside of the classroom. All HIP work must: 1) put academic knowledge into practice, 2) involve independent and/or collaborative projects completed outside the classroom, 3) be supervised by a faculty or professional mentor, and 4) result in a final product (poster, report, presentation, paper, work log, photo documentation, etc.) and a 500-600-word reflection. An explanation and rationale for each of these requirements follows:

Academic Knowledge in Practice

The HIP part of the Honors curriculum allows students to put their academic knowledge into practice in a variety of concrete ways:

- **In Honors Book Labs**, students read and discuss a range of important ethical, aesthetic, and cultural topics.
- As participants in the **Honors Leadership Academy** or members of the **Honors Student Advisory Board**, students learn to act as Honors ambassadors, peer educators, community builders, and/or publicists by collaborating on specific projects with Honors peers, staff, and faculty.
- In the **Honors Alumni Mentoring Programs**, students discuss with Honors alumni how to build upon their majors by setting and working toward their personal and professional goals.
- **In Honors Mentoring Agreements**, students and faculty design meaningful hands-on learning projects, empowering students to take control of the educational experience by applying their academic expertise to situations beyond the classroom. These mentoring agreements extend even into the graduate classroom with **Honors Excel**, an option that allows students to work with a professor to explore what it might be like to pursue further academic study at the graduate level.

Because experiential learning is central to USU’s land-grant mission, Honors structures these experiences and helps students learn to articulate their value.

Completion of Projects Outside the Classroom

All types of HIP work apply academic knowledge through independent or collaborative projects completed outside the classroom. Students work with a faculty (or professional) mentor, either in teams or individually, to propose and complete projects that address specific questions or problems, complete agreed-upon tasks, reflect upon experiential learning, and develop self-awareness and critical-thinking skills.

In **Honors Book Labs**, **Honors leadership** opportunities, and **Honors Alumni Mentoring Programs**, projects emerge from course, program, or committee content and requirements. For **Honors Mentoring Agreements**, students work with their mentors to define the parameters and value of their projects, provided this work goes beyond the content of any class in which the student has enrolled. The focus of each project varies, but all should develop the student’s academic experience in clear and practical ways.

By managing and completing these short-term projects, students prepare themselves for the Honors capstone experience. The Honors curriculum guides students in developing exceptional project-management skills and helps them to build a portfolio of project-oriented work that that they can share with future employers or graduate programs.
Mentoring

Honors students choose faculty or professional mentors to oversee their HIP work and to guide them in the production of final products and the editing and polishing of reflections. The nature of the practical experience shapes the choice of mentor. In Honors Book Labs and Honors Excel graduate courses, the mentor is the faculty member in charge. For academic Honors Mentoring Agreements (HMAs), the mentor is typically (although not always) a USU professor in the student’s field. For experiential HMAs, including community-engagement projects, internships, study abroad, Honors leadership opportunities, and the Honors Alumni Mentoring Programs, the mentor is often a community leader, professional, or program leader/staff member. Mentors are crucial in helping students to understand the need for personal and professional connections, to articulate the practical value and outcomes of their HIP projects, to learn project-management skills, and to situate each project within a growing portfolio of work that documents the student’s experiential learning at USU.

In most cases, faculty mentors and Departmental Honors Advisors (DHAs) approve the student’s final product and reflection. However, when necessary (particularly when mentors are not USU faculty members or for some Honors-structured experiences), the DHA in the student’s home department and/or the University Honors Program will provide formal approval of the final product. Students must indicate both the mentor and the final approver on their mentoring agreement forms, as appropriate.

Final Product and Reflection

Final products and reflections are what make HIP experiences essential to an Honors education: building a professional portfolio and articulating the value of one’s educational experience define a USU Honors student. While the purpose of final products and reflections remains fixed, their content can differ, depending on the type of HIP experience. Please refer to the appropriate section of the handbook or Canvas modules/assignments for details about what to include in reflections on each type of HIP experience.
Honors in Practice: Structured Experiences

Honors has developed structured experiences that guide students through HIP work. Each of the structures described below meets HIP requirements and results in the experiential learning and reflection that define HIP. 

*Please note that DHAs play no supervisory role in these Honors-structured HIP experiences.*

**Honors Book Labs**

Honors Book Labs create an engaging, short-term, interdisciplinary structure that is often a student’s first introduction to HIP. Each Book Lab consists of four virtual or in-person meetings, beginning in the second week of classes each semester (September and January) and in select summer months (usually June and July). Faculty members propose books to discuss, students sign up for labs, and Honors creates a schedule, organizes registration and waitlists (limit of five students per lab), and buys/delivers all books/e-books.

Students are responsible for the following tasks:
- **Reading** the books by the agreed-upon deadlines (set by Book Lab leader/instructor)
- **Attending** all four scheduled Book Lab meetings
- **Contributing** to the discussions at those meetings
- **Submitting** the required reflection in the Honors Canvas course, following the directions below (earning 1 Honors point upon approval by the Honors Program Executive Director)

**Reflections on Book Labs** should describe the HIP experience offered in the lab, rather than just summarizing the book’s plot or content. Within two weeks of the final meeting, students must submit in the University Honors Program Canvas course a 600-word reflection that articulates the following:

1. One **new idea or set of ideas** that the student discovered through reading and discussion
2. An example of how the reading and discussion led the student to **think critically** about a particular issue or problem
3. The value of discussing this issue or problem **across disciplines** with fellow students and instructor(s)
4. How the Book Lab experience might lead the student to **engage with the community or world** in a new way

Because demand is high and in fairness to all students, those enrolled in a lab must attend or return the book to remain in good standing with Honors. Any student who fails to meet the four basic requirements above (reading, attending, contributing, and submitting a reflection) will become ineligible for Book Labs in the following term and may jeopardize their Honors standing and privileges.

Students may participate in one Honors Book Lab per term, an experience that is repeatable, as long as they remain in good standing with Honors. They earn 1 Honors point for successfully completing each lab.

**Honors Leadership Academy**

Designed for first- and second-year students, the Honors Leadership Academy (HLA) offers a year-long curriculum that trains Honors students in five key leadership areas (each with three learning outcomes):

1. **Honors Ambassador:** Students learn about Honors requirements and opportunities, understand what it means to be an “Honors Ambassador,” and gain experience in recruiting new students to USU Honors.
2. **Honors Publicist**: Students learn about Honors publicity and social media, understand what it means to represent Honors in written and visual content, and gain experience in creating written and visual content for Honors messaging and social media.

3. **Honors Peer Educator**: Students learn the details of all Honors requirements and assignments, understand what it means to be an “Honors Peer Educator,” and gain experience in talking meaningfully with Honors peers about their understanding of Honors requirements and assignments.

4. **Honors Community Builder**: Students learn what it means to plan an Honors event, understand the value of experiencing and building Honors community, and gain experience in planning an annual Honors event.

5. **Honors Star**: Students learn about Honors signature events, understand the value of participating fully and visibly in those events, and gain experience in becoming a recognizable Honors student on campus.

Students must apply for admission, and admission is competitive. Admitted students complete an online Canvas course that includes (1) scheduled assignments, (2) meetings with Honors staff and student leaders, and (3) reflection on leadership.

Students who successfully complete all assignments AND submit a thoughtful reflection (500-600 words) on the entire Honors Leadership Academy experience will (1) gain a range of valuable, marketable leadership skills, (2) earn up to 3 Honors points, and (3) qualify for future Honors Student Leadership roles in the areas described above.

_Students must complete their year-long commitment to HLA or communicate early and clearly with Honors staff about extenuating circumstances to remain in good standing with the University Honors Program._

**Reflections on HLA** should describe the HIP experience offered in HLA, rather than just summarizing the work that the student did for each assignment. By the deadline posted in Canvas, students must describe in 500-600 words how this form of engagement gave the student an HIP experience by putting academic knowledge into practice (the goal of all HIP work) and helping the student prepare for student leadership in the five key areas of the curriculum. The reflection must address how the HLA experience met Honors learning outcomes in the following ways:

1. Added to the student’s _overall education_ and/or _future goals_ by developing leadership and ambassadorial, teaching, community building, or marketing skills
2. Demanded _critical thinking_ about the concept of leadership and the steps one takes to become a leader
3. Broadened the student’s experience across disciplines by building _relationships_ among students in HLA and between the student and the Honors Program staff
4. Engaged the student in the _campus_ and _broader communities_ through the ambassadorial, teaching, community building, or marketing roles

**Honors Student Advisory Board**

The role of the Honors Student Advisory Board (HSAB) is to advise the Executive Director and program staff in support of the mission, values, and goals of the University Honors Program. The board offers outstanding students the opportunity both to give back to the Honors Program and to earn Honors points for participating in this year-long HIP collaborative experience. We hope that students who enjoy helping to shape the University Honors Program while on campus will consider volunteering for our various alumni-engagement programs after they graduate and begin their professional lives.
The HSAB’s advisory role focuses in particular on the following areas:

- Recruitment and retention of students
- Curriculum
- Student engagement with Honors

The HSAB includes nine student members: one from each of USU’s eight academic colleges and one from statewide campuses. Student members apply for and are appointed for one-year terms by the Executive Director, based on committee review of applications. Terms are renewable for one additional year, by application, at the discretion of the Executive Director, in consultation with the review committee. HSAB members who meet all expectations and document their work in the University Honors Program Canvas course earn 3 Honors points for successful completion of one year, with the possibility of an additional 1.5 points for successful completion of a second year on the HSAB.

Students who agree to serve on the HSAB are expected to complete the full year of service and to submit the required reflection and documentation of HIP work in the University Honors Program Canvas course at the end of each academic year of service.

In addition to that general expectation, the responsibilities of each HSAB member include:

- Service as a role model for all Honors students, including a commitment to embody the Honors Program’s mission and values, attend and actively participate in Honors events, and engage with students in the Honors Leadership Academy
- Visible, vocal, active representation of the Honors Program in the college/statewide and across the institution
- Active preparation for and participation in monthly meetings of the HSAB
- Monthly check-ins with college/statewide counterpart on the Honors Faculty Advisory Board to identify barriers and pathways to retention of Honors students in the college/statewide
- Timely, thoughtful, and willing engagement in the evaluation and discussion of course proposals and other aspects of the Honors curriculum

Students earn points at the end of each year of service by submitting in the Honors Canvas course a final portfolio, which includes (1) an activity log documenting the name, date, hours, and a brief description of each HSAB-related activity completed on behalf of the University Honors Program (including required board meetings, time spent reviewing course proposals, and student-retention work in their colleges/statewide), and (2) a thoughtful, detailed reflection on the HSAB experience (500-600 words). Reflections and portfolios must be uploaded by the end of the summer term following board membership to earn points (by the last day of finals for students graduating in their year of service). Students must complete their year-long commitment to the advisory board or communicate early and clearly with Honors staff about extenuating circumstances to remain in good standing with the University Honors Program.

Reflections on the HSAB experience describe in 500-600 words how this form of engagement gave the student an HIP experience by putting academic knowledge into practice (the goal of all HIP work) and creating meaningful relationships with the student’s peers on the board, their counterpart on the Honors Faculty Advisory Board, the Honors Program Executive Director, and the Honors staff. The reflection must address how the HSAB experience met Honors learning outcomes in the following ways:

1. Added to the student’s overall education and/or future goals by developing leadership other professional skills
2. Demanded critical thinking about the Honors Program and the relationship between the student’s major, college, and other colleges and programs on campus
3. Broadened the student’s experience across disciplines by building relationships among students on the Board and between the student and the Honors Program Executive Director and staff
4. Engaged the student in the campus and broader communities through collaborative work with their counterpart on the Honors Faculty Advisory Board to retain Honors students in the college/statewide

**Honors Alumni Mentoring Programs**

Honors offers two structured HIP pathways designed to professionalize students as they meet alumni and earn Honors points: Honors Alumni Connect (HAC) is a one-term (spring) introduction to alumni mentoring for first- and second-year students, and the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program (AMP) is a year-long experience designed for advanced Honors students in their final two years at USU. Students apply for each of these programs and then select possible mentors from a web listing of bios in the fall for the year-long AMP and in the spring for the semester-long HAC.

**Honors Alumni Connect**

This HIP experience allows first- and second-year students to earn 1.5 Honors points by engaging in at least three conversations with alumni mentors over the course of one spring semester (most students spend between 1-3 hours per month on this experience). Honors suggests specific topics of conversation, but students and mentors have the flexibility to extend, develop, or adjust those topics to meet their needs. Students who complete all three conversations (via email, phone, video conference, or even in person, as circumstances allow), reflect in writing (500-600 words) on the experience (details on p. 8), and thank their mentors will earn Honors points at the end of the spring semester in which they enrolled. **Students who fail to thank their mentors will not earn points, even if they submit all other required work for HAC. Students must fulfill all HAC requirements and communicate early and clearly with Honors staff about extenuating circumstances to remain in good standing with Honors.**

**Honors Alumni Mentoring Program**

This year-long HIP experience builds long-term professional relationships between advanced Honors students (in their final two years at USU) and alumni with similar professional and/or academic interests. Honors has created a curriculum in a dedicated Canvas course covering four basic areas: Professionalism; Applications; Professional Networking, Development, and Organizations; and Gratitude and Appreciation. This curriculum foregrounds Honors learning outcomes and structures monthly student-mentor interactions via email, phone, video conference, or even in person, as circumstances allow. Most students spend between 1-3 hours per month (about 20 hours total) on this experience over the nine-month academic year.

The AMP requires progress on assignments and regular participation throughout the entire academic year. Completing this curriculum and submitting all required work results in 3 Honors points, which may be combined, for a total of 4.5 points, with either the 1.5 points students can earn through HAC in their first two years in Honors or a second year-long experience with a new mentor for an additional 1.5 points. We hope that students who enjoy working with an alumni mentor will consider mentoring a student themselves after they graduate and begin their own professional lives.

Students in AMP are responsible for completing and submitting all Canvas assignments, most of which require them to contact their assigned mentor for discussion of or feedback on their work. This work, like other HIP projects, will both add to the student’s professional portfolio, and result in a thoughtful reflection (500-600 words) on the mentoring experience as a final assignment. **Students who fail to thank their mentors will not earn points, even if they submit all other required work for AMP. Students must complete the entire program or communicate early and clearly with Honors staff about extenuating circumstances to remain in good standing with Honors.**
Reflections for HAC and/or AMP should describe in 500-600 words how the relevant program gave the student an HIP experience by putting academic knowledge into practice (the goal of all HIP work) and creating a meaningful relationship with the mentor. Reflections will vary according to student interest and the program in which the student enrolled. Students are welcome and encouraged to share reflections with mentors, as appropriate. The reflection must specifically address how the HAC or AMP met Honors learning outcomes in the following ways:

1. Added to the student’s overall education and/or future goals
2. Demanded critical thinking about the value of an Honors education and/or professional topics connected with the student’s major(s)/minor(s)
3. Broadened the student’s experience across disciplines or clarified the value of such breadth of experience
4. Engaged the student in the local or global communities or clarified the value of such engagement
Honors in Practice: Honors Mentoring Agreements

An Honors Mentoring Agreement (HMA) is a formal agreement between a student, a mentor, the Departmental Honors Advisor, and the Honors Program to complete an Honors in Practice experience. Each agreement proposes—and then documents the student’s completion of—an academic or professional project that extends learning beyond regular coursework. Students earn 3 Honors points for every successfully proposed, completed, and approved project, and these projects typically require a minimum of 20 hours of work outside the classroom. The Honors Program regularly updates outstanding HMA examples by type of agreement, so that students, faculty mentors, and DHAs can use these examples as a model for their own collaborative work.

Students take control of this part of the Honors curriculum, which allows them to identify meaningful real-world experiences and to articulate their personal and professional value. The best HMAs prepare students for the future and allow them to use what they know in concrete ways. Whether these agreements focus on the near future (capstone preparation, exploration of academic interests, study abroad) or a long-term plan (national fellowship applications, Honors Excel graduate courses, internships, professional research), they allow students to follow their intellectual passions and to make the most of USU’s many outstanding academic resources.

Types of Honors Mentoring Agreements

- **Research and Creative Work:** Students may design agreements with faculty mentors to explore their own or their mentor’s academic interests. These agreed-upon projects often prepare students for capstone work or graduate school by allowing them to complete preliminary research or reading, work as a research apprentice on a faculty project, experiment creatively in a field of interest, or develop a research presentation for public presentation. Furthermore, the projects can fill gaps in knowledge or skills not covered by regular coursework, investigate areas of academic interest outside a student’s major(s), or open up future possibilities with a major grant or scholarship application. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, both original work and apprenticeship with faculty build meaningful professional relationships between students and mentors. Students may apply for up to $500 from the Honors Research Fund per term to support travel and other costs related to research and creative work, and winners of URCO grants receive an automatic funding match from Honors. This form of HMA work can create a pathway to one of three optional transcript designations: research or creative work meets some requirements for USU’s Undergraduate Research designation.

- **Professional Internships:** Internships or field-related work experiences may be completed as HMAs, as long as they expand the student’s academic work with a practical and relevant professional apprenticeship. The mentor of an internship will typically be an on-site professional who supervises and guides the student’s work experience. In such cases, the DHA in the student’s home department and the Honors Program Executive Director perform the on-campus mentoring, evaluating the student’s reflection and final product to ensure that the experience meets criteria for HMA work. Daily contact with the on-site internship mentor meets the requirement for mentor-student meetings and can be noted on the HMA completion form.

- **Community Engagement:** Students may propose HMAs for local or global service/community-engaged projects that expand their classroom experience at USU. These HMAs are typically mentored by faculty members and/or professionals in the partner organization. Like internships, these projects will be overseen and mentored on campus by the student’s DHA and the Honors Program Executive Director. Final products for these projects can be photo-essays documenting the experience, videos, websites, podcasts, or written narratives, depending on the type of project. This form of HMA work can create a pathway to one (or possibly two) of three optional transcript designations.
designations: community-engaged projects meet some requirements for the Community-Engaged Scholar designation and globally engaged projects may also meet some requirements for the Global Engagement Scholar designation.

- **Honors Excel Graduate Courses:** Many Honors students enroll in graduate or professional programs each year; this HMA option places Honors students, with faculty permission, in existing graduate courses and thus allows them to see what it might be like to collaborate on cutting-edge research and/or learn about advanced topics in their disciplines with USU’s top faculty and graduate students. In addition to developing mentoring relationships that will continue through the Honors student’s undergraduate career, the Honors Excel structure allows students to explore a future professional path as they earn Honors points. Professors evaluate all Honors student work, coordinate collaboration, and set project requirements. Students must complete all assignments on time and pass the class to earn Honors points. **Students registered for Honors Excel classes must complete HMA proposal and HMA completion forms to earn points.** Faculty and/or departments are under no obligation to admit Honors students to graduate courses; the Honors Excel structure creates opportunities only when there is an agreed-upon fit between course and student. The final product for Honors Excel can be a required course project, but students must also submit a reflection on the experience with their HMA completion forms in the Honors Canvas course.

- **Study Abroad:** Study abroad may be completed under an HMA if the study expands the student’s academic experience internationally and reflectively. Mentors will typically be on-site faculty or trip leaders who supervise and guide the student’s international experience. As in internships, daily contact with on-site mentors meets the requirement for mentor-student meetings and can be noted on the HMA completion form. When mentors are not USU faculty or when the experience occurs during the summer, the DHA in the student’s home department and the Honors Program Executive Director perform the on-campus mentoring, evaluating the student’s reflection and final product to ensure that the experience meets Honors learning outcomes. Study abroad partially fulfills the requirements for the optional **Global Engagement Scholar Transcript designation.** Students may apply for up to $1000 from the **Honors Study Abroad Fund.**

- **Course Mentoring Agreements:** These agreements may be proposed and completed as extensions of or deeper explorations within upper-division (3000-level or above) non-Honors coursework. Such agreements are never part of regular coursework; instead, they offer students and professors together the option of looking beyond the course itself. Such agreements require additional work on behalf of both parties, but that work can be structured to enrich the course experience by involving (1) an extra project in an area of mutual interest; (2) specific agreed-upon research or reading/discussion between student and mentor; (3) pedagogical work on the part of the Honors student that benefits both the professor and other students in the class; (4) student leadership on a project that helps others to explore beyond the limits of the class; or (5) any other enrichment activity related to the course and designed collaboratively by the professor and student. The professor serves as project mentor, and students and mentors must meet at least six times outside of class, according to the guidelines on the HMA proposal and HMA completion forms. Students may not submit required coursework for the HMA, which is not graded and does not affect the course grade. Students must earn at least a “B-” in courses attached to proposed HMAs to earn Honors points.

**Excellent Uses of Honors Mentoring Agreements**

Remembering that HMAs are pathways toward future goals, students should carefully consider what each agreement adds to an Honors education. All Honors students master four key skills at USU: critical thinking, independent research/creative work, interdisciplinary learning, and community engagement. Our students
find the following types of agreements to be particularly useful in developing these skills, and we have seen outstanding work in each of these areas:

- **Capstone Preparation**: Although work completed in HMAs cannot be part of the capstone itself, students often design agreements that prepare them for their capstones and set them up for success. Such agreements can involve literature reviews or library research, creative experimentation, laboratory or fieldwork, courses or academic programs not offered by USU, or other forms of preparation. Reflections on these mentoring agreements prepare students to articulate their skills and development in their fields, and their final products often become starting points for more intensive capstone work. By building understanding that will support capstone work, students prepare themselves to think critically about their own and others’ work in their fields, and they often gain experience in research or creative work. Such reflective critical thinking and independent research/creative work are two of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU.

- **Research/Creative Apprenticeship**: Students can design HMAs that focus on research or creative work, whether or not that work is directly connected to a future capstone project. As outlined above, independent research/creative work (defined, in a broad sense, as gathering and communicating knowledge) is of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU. Acting as a research or creative apprentice in a professor’s lab, studio, or field work trains students in important research/creative methods. Reflecting on that experience then deepens understanding of one’s place within a chosen research or creative field.

- **Academic Exploration and Risk-Taking**: Some students may want to deepen and contextualize their academic knowledge by applying what they learn in class to an extracurricular project or by engaging in academic work outside their areas of expertise. Because they are ungraded experiences, HMAs are an ideal safe space for such academic experimentation. Interdisciplinary learning is another of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU. Students interested in placing their academic knowledge in a broader context can design course mentoring agreements with faculty in or outside of their majors (provided the course is at the 3000-level or above); they may also choose to work outside the curriculum with faculty whose expertise might help to fill a gap in their knowledge—or connect their knowledge to other disciplines. Reflecting on this experience puts one’s major interests in context.

- **Local/Global Engagement**: Students can focus their HMAs on local, national, or international service/humanitarian projects, research, or internships. Community engagement is one of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU, and HMA work may therefore put academic knowledge into practice in the local, national, or global communities. Students who pursue these kinds of HMAs will necessarily reflect on the broader relevance of their academic work, and they may also decide to pursue USU’s Global Engagement Scholar or Community-Engaged Scholar transcript designations.

- **Professional Development**: HMAs may also foster professional development by engaging students in graduate coursework, (inter)national fellowship applications, internships, or other professional exploration. Like capstone preparation projects, mentoring agreements focused on professional development teach students to think critically and practically about future plans, engage in professional research/creative work, forge interdisciplinary connections for professional purposes, and engage with a professional community. Such professional work and reflection thus helps students hone some/all of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU.
Work Not Appropriate for Honors Mentoring Agreements: Guidelines and Rules

HMAs are designed to be flexible, but they must add clear, distinct, and documented value to an Honors education. The program requires approval of proposals and completed agreements by mentors, DHAs, and the Honors Executive Director because these faculty experts can assess that added value within a specific area of study, the discipline as a whole, and across disciplinary boundaries. When in doubt about a specific kind of experience, students should seek the input of the University Honors Program Advisor or their DHAs. The following work cannot be framed with HMAs:

- **Work Required for a Course**: Students may not earn Honors points for regular coursework, just as they may not, according to USU’s academic honesty/integrity code, submit the same work for credit in different courses. The HIP part of the Honors curriculum asks students to apply their knowledge beyond the classroom, and using coursework for that experience defeats the purpose. One exception to this rule is experiential credit for experiences like internships, study abroad, and graduate work in Honors Excel. Because of the experiential growth-oriented nature of this work, students may propose HMAs that include substantial final products and reflections, even when students take those experiences for credit.

- **Capstone Project Work**: Although HMAs may prepare students for capstone projects, they cannot be a direct part of the final capstone project. Students earn distinct Honors points for HIP work and for the capstone project, and completing the same work for these two separate parts of the Honors curriculum does not meet the goals of the program. The rationale in these circumstances is therefore the same as in any course: students may not submit the same work for credit in two different courses.

- **USU Scholarship or Grant Applications**: Honors recognizes the importance of student applications for department, college, Honors, or university scholarships or grants (including URCO, Honors Research and Study Abroad Fund, USUSA funding, etc.). Only major national or international grant and scholarship/fellowship applications can be proposed as HMAs, however, because they require much more extensive self-assessment, mentoring, revision, and research to complete. Any national fellowship application submitted as a mentoring agreement must be proposed and completed in the same way as other such agreements.

- **Conferences, Trainings, or Other Brief, Unmentored Professional Experiences**: Honors also recognizes the importance of student professionalization activities, such as conference presentations or attendance, or attendance at other professional events of a limited scope, and supports these experiences through Honors Research Funding opportunities. However, only those experiences that include a sustained mentoring relationship, a clear, concrete final product, and at least 20 hours of experiential work outside the classroom qualify as HMAs.
Steps and Timelines for Honors Mentoring Agreements

Students must follow the steps below to earn 3 Honors points upon completion and submission of work.

1. CONTACT MENTOR – The earlier students contact mentors, the more time they have to work together and the more likely the student is to show due respect for the mentor’s time, expertise, and support. Ideally, students talk to potential mentors in the term before the agreement would begin. The mentor and DHA may be the same person for HMA work; this rule differs from the Honors capstone, which requires a third committee member if the mentor and DHA are the same. Remember to follow USU’s academic honesty/integrity policy, described above.
   - Course mentoring agreements require mentor contact no later than the first week of the term.

2. SUBMIT MENTOR-APPROVED AGREEMENT PROPOSAL TO DHA – Following the detailed instructions on the HMA proposal, mentor and student complete each part of the proposal, mentor signs, and DHA has one week to give final approval (with signature) before students must upload proposals in the Honors Canvas course. Proposals should be uploaded and signed/approved by all parties (student, mentor, DHA, Honors) before the official start date of the work, but students may ask an Honors advisor for help if they did not submit a proposal but want to create an agreement for a completed project. HMAs are typically completed within 10-15 weeks.
   - Course mentoring agreements require students to submit the mentor-approved proposal to DHA by the end of the second week of classes in the agreement term.

3. UPLOAD MENTOR AND DHA-APPROVED HMA PROPOSAL TO HONORS CANVAS COURSE – Student, mentor, and DHA must have signed the form; Honors verifies that agreement proposes to meet HMA requirements and approves/denies proposal in Canvas.
   - Course mentoring agreements require students to upload the mentor- and DHA-approved proposal to Honors Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes in the agreement term.

4. COMPLETE WORK WITHIN TIMELINE – Keep in mind that the timeline need not align with the term schedule; students may work with faculty to restructure the timeline of the agreement, as necessary.

5. LOG AT LEAST 20 HOURS OF WORK OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM – This work should enrich the student’s academic experience beyond regular coursework. Students may complete more than one HMA for long projects, but each part of the project must be proposed, approved, and completed as a separate HMA.

6. HOLD REGULAR MENTOR-STUDENT MEETINGS (minimum of six meetings) – Remember that these meetings about the project must take place outside of class (if relevant). Students record all mentor meetings and report on them at the end of the project (for global engagement or internship projects that require regular daily interaction between student and mentor, no additional documentation is necessary).

7. SEND REFLECTION AND FINAL PRODUCT DRAFTS TO MENTOR AND DHA (one week before the final day of agreement) – This timeline gives the mentor and DHA a chance to offer feedback or identify problems with meeting Honors requirements before final submission to Honors.
   - Course mentoring agreements require students to submit this draft of the reflection and any other final product to the mentor one week before the last day of classes in the agreement term.

8. UPLOAD REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, AND SIGNED COMPLETION FORM TO HONORS CANVAS COURSE – All requirements described on form; due at end of project (merged pdf).
   - Course mentoring agreements require students to upload reflection, final product, and completion form to the Honors Canvas course as soon as possible at the end of the agreement term.
Responsibilities in Honors Mentoring Agreements: Overview

Built upon mentoring relationships between Honors students and faculty/professionals, each HMA involves not only a primary mentor, but also the DHA and the Honors Program Executive Director. Mentoring an Honors project takes time, and students should therefore make every effort to develop projects that will interest and engage their mentors. The best way to find mentors is to work on building positive working relationships with faculty and other professionals: students can begin to shape those relationships in classes, through research or service projects, and within clubs and other academic or professional organizations. Mentors are much more likely to help students whom they recognize as bright, organized, dependable, curious, and engaged with their fields.

Because these relationships are so crucial to the Honors curriculum, the program has carefully defined responsibilities for the HMA process. Before entering into such an agreement, please familiarize yourself with the responsibilities of the student, mentor, DHA, and Honors Program.

**Brief Overview**

**Students** are responsible for selecting and working with a mentor to write a mentoring agreement proposal, securing all required signatures and promptly submitting the proposal in the Honors Canvas course, conferring regularly with the mentor, meeting all deadlines, and completing a high-quality final product (along with a reflection) that fulfills the agreement.

**Mentors** are responsible for helping the student to define and focus the project, mentoring the agreed-upon work and the construction of a meaningful final product and reflection, and ensuring high quality work within the discipline.

**Departmental Honors Advisors** act as liaisons between the mentor and the Honors Program, ensuring that proposed projects meet both Honors requirements and disciplinary standards; students may therefore choose whether to submit their HMAs to the DHA in their own and/or their mentor’s home department, if that department differs from their own.

**The Honors Program** supports students and faculty and ensures that all HMAs meet Honors standards and thus merit the award of Honors points documenting successful completion of the project.

More detailed responsibilities are outlined below.
Honors Student Responsibilities for Honors Mentoring Agreements

PROPOSAL:
- Work with mentor to complete an HMA proposal (form on Honors website) following the required format, including a clear description of project goal(s), proposed work, rationale, reasonable timeline (typically 10-15 weeks), and final product. Mentor and student sign when approved.
- Send an electronic copy of the proposal to the appropriate DHA once signed by mentor and student. DHA signs and returns, if approved, within one week.
- For course agreements, submit a mentor-signed/approved proposal to the DHA by the end of the second week of classes in the agreement term and upload a mentor- and DHA-signed/approved form and proposal to the Honors Canvas course by end of the third week of classes.
- For all other HMAs, upload the form and proposal (merged into a single PDF) to the Honors Canvas course once the proposal is approved and signed by both your faculty mentor and the appropriate DHA.

PROJECT WORK:
- Schedule, hold, and document regular (minimum six) mentor meetings (for study abroad and internships, such meetings may occur daily and may be noted as such on the completion form).
- Work with the mentor to decide how the meeting time will be used effectively and complete any agreed-upon work prior to meetings.
- Finish all agreed-upon work in a professional and timely manner, according to proposed timeline.
- Discuss immediately with the mentor, DHA, and/or Honors staff any changes to or questions about student responsibilities and/or work.

FINAL PRODUCT and PROJECT COMPLETION:
- Present a draft of the required final product and reflection to the mentor at least one week before the final day of the agreement (one week before the last day of classes for course agreement).
- Carefully craft and/or edit the final product, responding to mentor feedback as necessary.
- Send the completed final product and reflection to the mentor, for approval and signature, and then to the DHA, allowing time for review, comments, and approval (signatures on the HMA completion form indicate such approval). Please remember that faculty must see all information completed on this form, as they are verifying its accuracy with their signatures.
- Upload the approved final product and reflection, along with the signed HMA completion form (available on Honors website) indicating faculty approval to the Honors Canvas course by the last day of classes in the agreement term (course agreements) or by the project completion date (all other agreements). Please merge all documents as one PDF (see directions in Canvas).
Mentor Responsibilities for Honors Mentoring Agreements

PROPOSAL:
- Work with the student to draft the HMA proposal (form available on Honors website) following the required format, including a clear description of project goal(s), proposed work and timeline (typically 10-15 weeks), rationale, and an appropriate final product that demonstrates work completed.
- Sign proposal when approved.
- Please note that once the mentor has approved, students will send the HMA to the appropriate Departmental Honors Advisor (DHA) for review, comments, approval, and signature.
- Course-related agreements must be signed and submitted to DHAs by the end of the second week of classes in the agreement term and uploaded (by students) to the Honors Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes.
- All other HMAs are accepted on a rolling basis and are typically completed within 10-15 weeks. Mentors may remind students of deadlines and process, but it is the student’s responsibility to secure all signatures and to upload the form and proposal on time.
- By signing a student’s HMA proposal form, the faculty mentor indicates approval of the project plan, timeline, and proposed final product. Please keep in mind that all agreements require students to complete a 500-600-word reflection on the experience, in addition to submission of a final product.

PROJECT WORK:
- Hold regular meetings with the student (minimum six meetings outside of the classroom—study abroad faculty or internship supervisors who meet with students daily need not schedule additional meetings) and ensure that the meetings are pedagogically useful (the student’s responsibilities include meeting scheduling, working with the mentor to define meeting structure, and completing any agreed-upon work prior to the meetings).
- Guide the student in completing the agreed-upon work in a professional and timely manner, according to the proposed timeline.
- Discuss immediately with the student, the DHA, and/or Honors staff any questions about mentoring responsibilities and/or the student’s progress on the work of the HMA.

REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, and PROJECT COMPLETION:
- Require a draft of the final product and reflection early enough to allow for revision, as necessary (at least one week before the last day of classes for course agreements).
- Offer timely feedback and ensure that the final product and reflection meet the terms of the agreement and represent useful and competent work in the student’s discipline.
- Sign and return the student’s completed HMA completion form indicating approval of both project and reflection (NOTE: students should complete the form fully before seeking approval/signatures). If the student has not satisfactorily completed the project agreement, please communicate promptly with Honors.
- Please note that once the mentor has approved and signed the HMA completion documentation, students must also submit the final product and reflection to the DHA for approval/signature. Students will then upload the signed HMA completion form (indicating faculty approval of agreement), final product, and reflection to the Honors Canvas course by the last day of classes in the agreement term (course agreements) or by the agreement completion date (all other HMAs).
Departmental Honors Advisor Responsibilities for Honors Mentoring Agreements

The DHA oversees not the individual HMA work itself, but the process within the department. For this reason, DHAs may be responsible for agreements of students and/or faculty mentors in their home departments; please remember that students may choose to complete agreements outside of their home departments. Acting as a liaison between the student/mentor team and the University Honors Program, the DHA ensures that all projects meet minimum requirements both within the discipline and for Honors.

PROPOSAL:
- Help Honors students find appropriate mentors in the department for their proposed HMA work and direct students to examples of outstanding Honors Mentoring Agreements from the past. DHAs should learn what makes a strong agreement themselves and share this link with both students and faculty who need direction.
- Signed, mentor-approved course agreement proposals are due to DHAs during the first or second week of classes (for review) and for signature by the end of the second week of classes in the agreement term.
- All other (non-course) HMAs are accepted by Honors on a rolling basis and should be reviewed, signed, and returned to the student promptly. The DHA’s responsibility is to review these agreements to ensure that their timelines are reasonable (agreements are typically completed within 10-15 weeks) and that they meet both standards in the discipline and Honors requirements (at least 20 hours of work that usefully applies academic knowledge, includes regular mentor meetings, and results in a final product).
- For HMAs that meet these requirements and that address each part of the proposal form (goals and work, timeline, rationale, and final product articulation), please electronically sign the HMA proposal form and return it to the student within one week, since students must then upload signed forms and proposals to the Honors Canvas course.
- For HMAs that do not meet these requirements, communicate clearly and promptly with students and mentors about problems with the agreement. Work with students and mentors to revise and resubmit agreements in a timely fashion (course agreements are due for student upload with all signatures in the Honors Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes).

PROJECT WORK:
- DHAs are not responsible for overseeing HMA work, although they do review outcomes and approve if the work has been completed as proposed (see below). Please make time to answer any questions about Honors requirements.

REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, and PROJECT COMPLETION:
- DHAs are responsible for ensuring that mentors and students understand Honors requirements for HMAs, reviewing final products and reflections, and signing HMA completion forms only when projects meet those requirements. In some instances, DHAs act as the final approver of an internship, work experience, or study abroad experience (if there is no faculty mentor); they may also, in some cases, serve as both DHA and mentor, in which case they can indicate that fact on the form.
- HMAs must be completed by the last day of classes in each agreement term (course agreements) or by the agreement completion date (all other HMAs).
University Honors Program Responsibilities for Honors Mentoring Agreements

To ensure that proposed HMA projects meet all Honors requirements, the University Honors Program reviews and approves/denies each HMA proposal and then approves/denies the completion of the agreement for Honors points upon submission in Canvas of the student’s final product, reflection, and HMA completion form. Honors Program responsibilities include:

PROPOSAL:
- Regularly and consistently remind students and DHAs of HMA proposal contents and requirements.
- Promptly review all HMA proposals once students upload them in the Honors Canvas course, ensuring that all proposal forms are signed by both mentor and DHA and that they include clear descriptions of project goals, proposed work and timelines, and final product(s), in addition to the required reflection.
- Communicate immediately with any students, mentors, and DHAs whose proposals do not meet minimum requirements, and work with them as necessary to revise and resubmit the proposals.

PROJECT WORK:
- Meet annually with DHAs and students to clarify the purpose, value, structure, and processes of HMAs.
- Build and maintain an archive of outstanding HMA examples so that students and faculty understand the possibilities and value of HMA work. Individually archive all work and guide students in the use of the Canvas Portfolium tool.
- Make the Honors in Practice Handbook available on the Honors website and distribute, upon request, to all mentors and students who have entered into (or are considering) HMAs.
- Answer any questions about HMA goals, requirements, and responsibilities.
- Support faculty, professional mentors, DHAs, and students in the HMA process.

REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT and PROJECT COMPLETION:
- Advise students about completion of the HMA process and ensure that they receive information about HMAs and other HIP milestones annually.
- Remind faculty and students of HMA requirements and timelines as necessary: the reflection and final product of the agreement should be carefully crafted and/or edited, and both documents must be uploaded to the Honors Canvas course, along with a completed and signed HMA completion form (see Honors website), by the agreement completion date (last day of classes for course agreements).
- Promptly review and approve/deny all HMA completion uploads (including final products, reflections, and HMA completion forms), ensuring that all work meets Honors requirements for HIP work.
- Award students in the Honors Canvas course the points marking the completion of each HMA project.
Resources and Assistance

Funding: Please see the Honors website for application materials.

- Many Honors students completing HIP projects are eligible for Honors Research and Study Abroad Funds (HRSAF). These awards range from $50-$1000 to support student research, study abroad, unpaid internships, conference participation, and other scholarly or creative activity. Honors accepts applications on a rolling basis.
- Students may also apply for Undergraduate Research and Creative Opportunities (URCO) grants and/or Peak Summer Research Fellowships to support research-focused HMAs. URCO deadlines are October 15, February 15, and June 15; more information is available on the Office of Research website. The HRSAF (above) automatically matches URCO grants for successful Honors applicants (no need for an additional application to Honors).
- Students should check with their departments, colleges, and USUSA about funding resources for undergraduate work.

Facilities and Computing: Honors students are invited to contact honors@usu.edu to learn more about available study spaces in the Living and Learning Community and the USU library. All Honors students have access to the Joyce Kinkead Honors Study Room in 334H of the Merrill-Cazier library (contact Honors for passcode). The computer facilities in the study room are available during regular library hours.

Writing, Editing, and Math: Honors encourages students to take advantage of the USU Writing Center, Science Writing Center, and Aggie Math Learning Center. These resources can help students improve and edit writing at any level, learn to proofread their own work and analyze their evidence/data more effectively, complete calculations or statistical analyses in a project or for a course. Please make use of these Aggie resources.

HIP Canvas Training: Honors maintains a series of self-paced modules about HIP work in our Honors Canvas course. Students can learn about types of HIP work, examine examples of outstanding projects, and begin to explore the possibilities for their own projects. Students typically complete these modules in the summer between their first and second years, although students are free to start at any time. They may also use the Honors Canvas course to chat with peers, contact a librarian about areas of interest, ask Honors staff or peer advisors specific questions, and find information about upcoming deadlines and opportunities.
Frequently Asked Questions

**Can students get paid for their Honors in Practice work?**
Yes. There are many opportunities for paid internships, laboratory jobs, or fieldwork. Additionally, students may apply for Undergraduate Research or Creative Opportunity (URCO) grants that allow for student scholarships in support of approved research projects. Honors awards points for completed HIP work as long as students arrange HMAs for that work and submit documentation of completed projects, with appropriate approval and reflection, in the Honors Canvas course. Please note that Honors Research Fund awards cannot cover student wages or compensation.

**Can students count required course work for Honors in Practice?**
No. With the exceptions of approved Honors Excel, internships, and study abroad experiences, HMA work must be distinct from required regular coursework (see USU’s Academic Honesty/Integrity policy). While HMA work often advances or extends the themes in courses, the work and final product for an HMA must not overlap with regular, required coursework. HMA work is not graded and does not affect a student’s GPA or any course grade, making it an ideal intellectual playground. Honors Excel courses are always counted as HIP milestones if they are agreed upon with the professor and submitted with HMAs in the Honors Canvas course.

**Can students complete Honors in Practice work outside of their main fields of study?**
Yes. HIP work can deepen and contextualize Honors students’ academic knowledge by allowing them to engage in significant and practical academic work outside their majors. This kind of work is particularly useful for students whose capstone projects or professional interests might involve interdisciplinary work. Students should find an appropriate faculty mentor and propose an HMA to earn Honors points for such work.

**Can an Honors Mentoring Agreement be connected to a student’s Honors capstone project?**
Yes, within the restrictions of USU’s academic honesty/integrity policy. Mentoring agreement work can absolutely feed into a student’s Honors capstone project, but completing part of the capstone as an HMA is not allowed. Honors encourages students to perform literature reviews or preliminary research, engage in field or lab work, and apprentice themselves on faculty projects in preparation for their own capstone projects. This work can lay a foundation for the capstone, with the faculty mentor’s approval.

**What happens if I cannot complete a proposed HMA?**
Sometimes circumstances prevent a student from completing a proposed HMA. If for whatever reason a student decides not to complete a mentoring agreement that has already been approved by the mentor, DHA, and/or Honors, they must communicate immediately with the mentor/professor and DHA, as a personal and professional courtesy. The Honors Program also requests that students notify the Honors Program Advisor of this decision so that we can assist the student and/or faculty, as necessary.
Advice from Past Honors Students

Most Honors students find the Honors in Practice part of the curriculum to be a chance to gain practical experience. Designing and managing short-term projects prepares students for the longer-term capstone project, and engaging with other students in Honors Book Labs or other structured Honors experiences builds both skills and community. HIP is an opportunity to grow both personally and professionally, and our students advise you to make the most of that opportunity.

Students especially advise their peers to maximize these benefits of HIP work:

1. **Develop relationships with your professors.**
   Professors can help you find projects you are interested in, connect you to opportunities and resources, provide expert feedback, and serve as valuable mentors. Honors Mentoring Agreement mentors can eventually become capstone mentors, and all mentors can write strong, specific recommendation letters because they know you and your work.

2. **Gain practical experience.**
   HIP allows students to put knowledge into practice and learn to navigate real-world situations. As you begin to look beyond the classroom and into the future, seek out practical experiences (in the lab, the community, or the field/workplace) that will help you reach your personal and professional goals.

3. **Explore and refine possible capstone topics.**
   Honors Mentoring Agreements can help you discover topics that you are passionate about and can serve as springboards to your Honors capstone project. They can also introduce you to potential faculty mentors and give you experience that will strengthen your capstone and other future projects.

4. **Seek out an internship or study abroad.**
   Internships and study abroad experiences will help you discover your interests, gain valuable personal and professional skills, and make important connections. Honors Research and Study Abroad funding can help support these experiences, so remember to apply for financial support as you pursue these opportunities.

5. **Present or share your work.**
   Presenting your work at a conference or other public forum gives you the opportunity to gain valuable insight from professionals in your field, share your knowledge with others, and refine your communication skills. Honors Research Funding can help support this work, and your mentors can help you find opportunities to present or share your work with others.