The Senior Reflection Essay – An Overview

The Global Honors reflection essay is a 2-credit capstone of 10-12 pages which (a) integrates your reflections on one or more themes covered by the Global Honors curriculum with your study abroad experience, and (b) involves personal assessment of your understanding and implementation of global citizenship. How has your grasp of the world grown more sophisticated, more complex, more political, or more urgent? Have some aspects of the Global Honors experience made you more curious about the world? What key ideas have shaped and reshaped your thinking over the past two years? What ideas will continue to shape your life and thought beyond graduation?

Typically, you will enroll in TGH 490 (2 credits) in winter quarter of your second year to prepare for the essay writing process. You will then enroll in TGH 495A (make sure to register for 2 credits, not 5) in spring quarter, working with the guidance of a faculty adviser to bring your reflection to completion. Please note the 2 credit reflection essay is not sufficient if you intend to graduate with a Minor in Global Engagement. All students must present their capstones, including reflections and internships, at the Spring Colloquium in May.

Your reflection essay adviser should be someone with whom you feel comfortable working, and who is knowledgeable in the field of your chosen topic. TGH 490 will explain how to effectively engage with your adviser, choose and refine your topic, set and adhere to a schedule, understand the responsibilities of working independently, and develop your research and writing skills.

For formatting instructions, please refer to the ‘GH Capstone Thesis Specifications’ document available on the Global Honors website and from the Global Honors office. Other than in terms of length, reflection essays must follow the same formatting specifications as a full capstone thesis.

These guidelines provide a lot of leading questions, meant to stimulate your personal reflections. Obviously you can’t address all those questions in a short essay. Focus on a topic that best captures the GH experiences and ideas that you want to reflect upon. Keep your reader in mind: what do you want an intelligent, curious, well informed reader to learn from your reflection?

Keys to success and choosing your topic

- Commit as early as possible to a topic that interests you.
- Develop a good working relationship early on with your faculty adviser.
- Be your own strictest critic on your essay’s evolving organization and content.
A successful essay should be creative. It should have a clear voice, giving your readers a candid, honest view of the person you have become.

Your essay is shorter than a full thesis, but don’t underestimate the time and thought required to write a series of drafts. Plan for substantial feedback from your adviser and understand it is through this process of thinking, writing, revising, and rewriting that your reflections mature and ripen.

Keep in mind that the growth discussed in your reflection essay is only an indication of where you are at this point in your life. Recognize that the processes you describe will still be at work as you move beyond graduation. As you pull together the various aspects of your GH experience, think about the direction future growth might lead. Where do you expect this journey will take you and how will it shape the person you eventually hope to be?

The reflection essay will serve as the basis for your required presentation at the Global Honors Spring Colloquium. The paper should therefore have a tangible and relatable focus. You should be able to extract a targeted topic that will be engaging for the Colloquium’s audience.

You may partner with any full-time UWT faculty member as your faculty adviser. Since this option does not involve intensive research and expertise, your choice may include a GH or any other instructor at UWT. You are encouraged to identify this person as early as possible.

What the GH reflection essay is Not

- The reflection essay is not an empty exercise to fulfill a final requirement. Rather, the essay is your opportunity to earnestly reflect on your experiences and make some clear, coherent sense of everything. This should be enormously valuable as you leave UWT and embark on your life as a global citizen.
- The reflection essay is not a cover letter for potential employers. (That is not to say that future employers couldn't or wouldn't want to read it). It is intended as an exploration of your intellectual development. Rather than promoting your skills or bolstering your resume, you’re being asked for deep introspection.
- The reflection essay is not merely a list of activities and growth experienced during coursework and study abroad. Instead, it should give a coherent vision of the person you have become. Remember personal growth is not the result of checking off items on a list. Maturity develops from changes in perception, and it's these subtle changes that you are ultimately trying to explore.
- The reflection essay is not a confessional. Although your essay is deeply personal, it need not address emotional vulnerabilities or the like. Sometimes, an account of personal growth may include things that are not intended to be common knowledge. That's fine, but think about social boundaries when discussing private feelings in a public forum such as this.

1Gratefully adapted from Bridgewater College in Virginia’s guidelines at: www.bridgewater.edu/PersonalDevelopmentPortfolio/TipsAndGuidelines-PDP/ReflectiveEssay
**Student Responsibility**

Although your faculty adviser will provide guidance, ultimate responsibility for completing the research and preparing a quality essay is yours alone. You are responsible for gathering the necessary information, meeting deadlines, and ensuring that the final copy of your essay is signed and delivered to the appropriate places in the correct format.

Your essay makes a permanent contribution to Global Honors. You are responsible for taking a professional approach. Do the best job you’re capable of doing. Accomplishing this requires good planning, an early start, and familiarizing yourself with the language and protocols of academic writing. In completing your essay, you are responsible for meeting regularly with your adviser and following her/his recommendations, establishing a realistic timeline, doing your best to follow the objectives of your reflection, providing your adviser with drafts, and preparing a high quality final product.

In short, own it. By identifying a personally meaningful topic, viewing the essay as a genuine opportunity rather than just a technical requirement, and taking pride in your work, you will be your best possible task master and achieve something very satisfying indeed.

**Procedural Information**

The sequence you might follow in completing your essay is as follows. Most of you will find months 1 - 3 encompass your preparatory work in T GH 490, and months 4 - 5 your spring quarter work within T GH 495 A. However, the research and writing process can never start too early.

**Months 1-3** **Develop your essay proposal in TGH 490.** Read literature. Refine your approach.

**Month 2-3** Identify an adviser and discuss topic(s), timeline, feasibility, and his/her expectations. Establish frequency of meetings for spring quarter and goals for those meetings. Fill out and sign the TGH 495A Registration Form and Faculty Adviser Appointment Letter (available online and from the Global Honors office) with your faculty adviser. Submit these to the Global Honors office, CP 311C.

**Month 4** Complete your research (with the understanding that as you write, you may also be reading some additional material). Meet with your faculty adviser once per week if possible during spring quarter to discuss progress. Submit your rough draft and progress log for her/his review. Summarize your adviser’s recommendations. Keep the Global Honors Program Administrator informed of your progress.

**Month 5** Write a substantial draft of the paper and submit to your adviser. Upon receiving her/his comments, revise. Your adviser is not unreasonable if s/he requests substantial rethinking, additional reading, revision, rewriting, even at the eleventh hour. It’s all part of the process, rewrite as needed and don’t expect to nail it on the first or second (or sixth…) attempt.

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End of Month 5

Submit the final draft to your adviser for her/his approval. Submit final draft simultaneously to the Global Honors Program Administrator for review of format. **Note: At the latest, this draft should be submitted by week 7 of spring quarter, i.e. before the Spring Colloquium.**

Global Honors Research Colloquium: Final oral presentation (approximately fifteen minutes). Make final corrections as required then bind the completed and approved final thesis.