

Exploring Music Students' Perspective
on Honors Contract Projects:
Discovering More Effective Strategies
for Facilitating Honors Contract
Experiences

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The Problem

- Institutional intent of honors contracts: To promote greater depth and rigor for academically able students
- A possible disconnect: Students' anecdotal comments seemed to indicate that their experience was not always consistent with the intent of honors contracts.

The Research

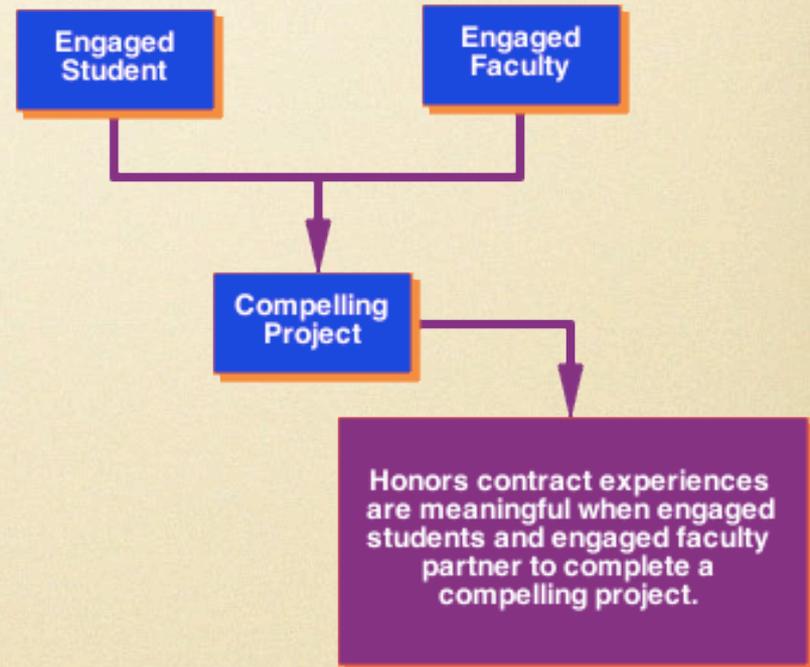
- We wanted to understand honor students' perspectives on honors contract experiences.
- This research was a student and faculty collaboration.
 - For student this met the requirements for the Honors Thesis.
 - For faculty this was a project consistent with current research agenda.
 - This is a very beneficial partnership.

The Interviews

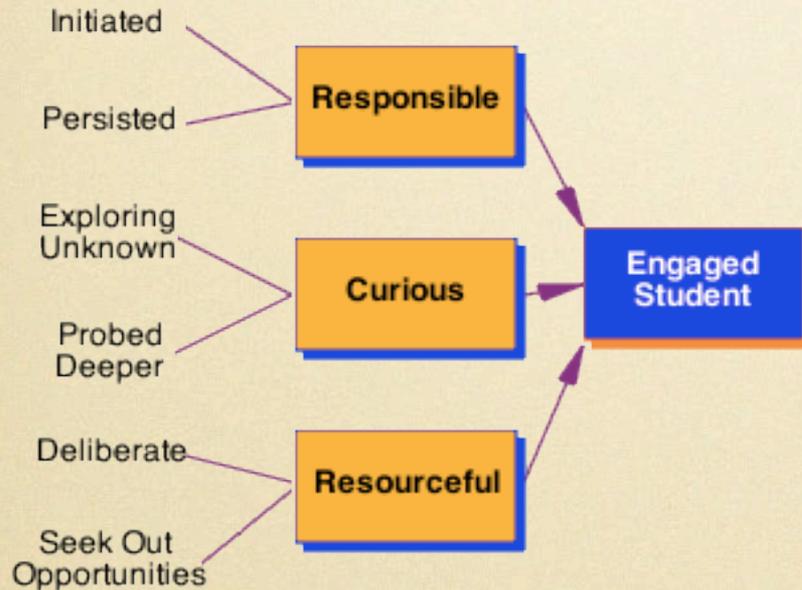
- Ten music honors students from a large Midwestern university were purposefully sampled and interviewed and asked to respond to these questions:
 - 1) How do you describe your best honors contract experience?
 - 2) How do you describe your ideal honors contract experience?
 - 3) How have your *actual* experiences compared to your *ideal* experiences?
 - 4) If you were to write a handbook for faculty and students doing honors contracts, what would you include?

The Findings

Honors contract experiences are meaningful when engaged students and engaged faculty partner to complete a compelling project.



The Engaged Student

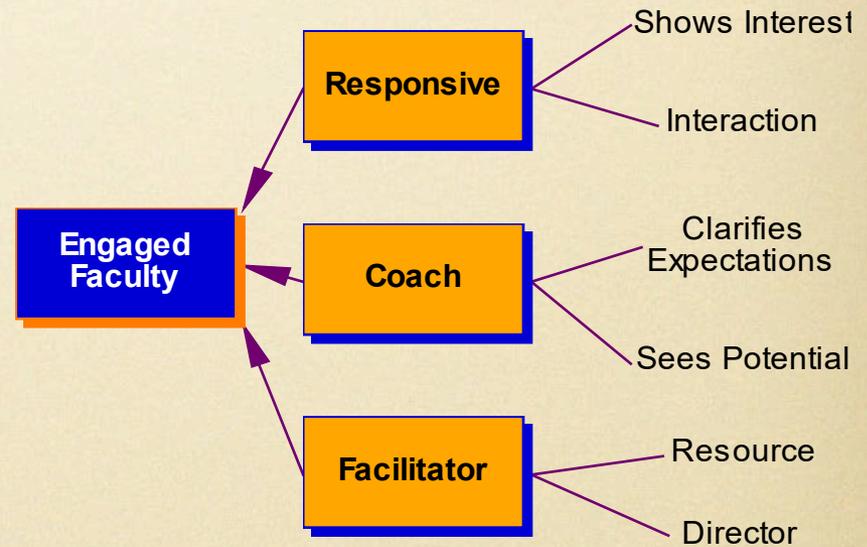


Ultimate success or failure of the contract is dependent on student engagement throughout the experience

Engaged Faculty

Student engagement is dependent on faculty role in the entire process.

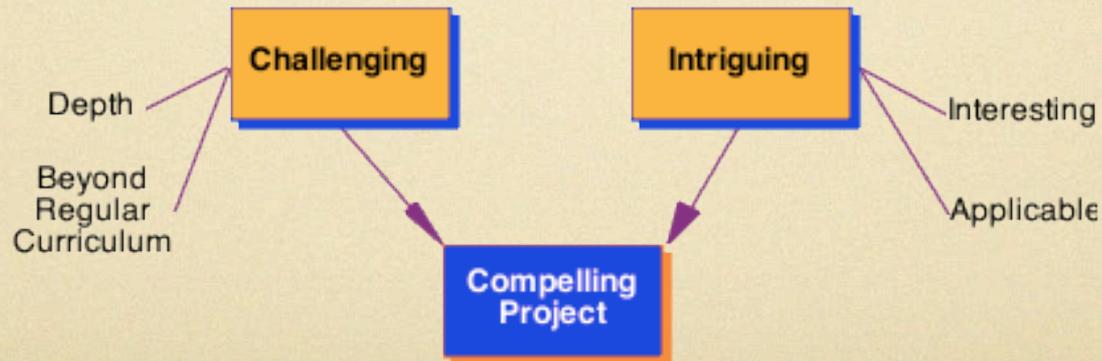
This theme was most often described in what students *would like to have experienced* rather than in terms of what they had experienced.



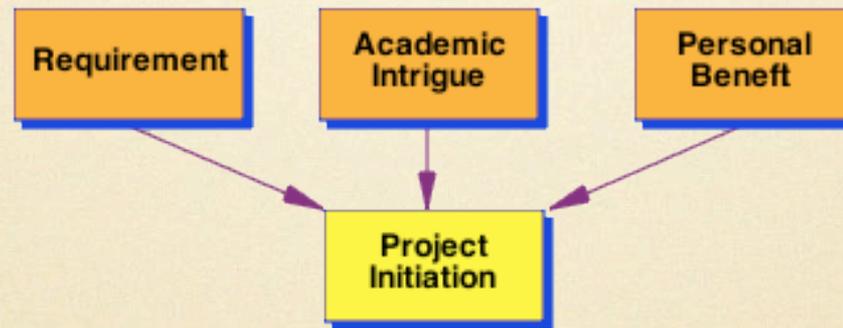
Compelling Project

Student and faculty engagement are dependent upon their interest and investment in the project.

“I think it's really important that both parties, the students and the professor, take the time to find a project that is sparking interest in both parties and that they'll be willing to stick with for awhile and see where it goes.” (Chad)



Project Initiation



How a student entered the experience influenced the perception of the value of the experience.

Practical Suggestions

- Suggestions for Developing Honors Contract Projects
- Project Ideas
 - Making Music Project
 - Critical Reflection Project
 - Research Paper Project
- These materials are available for you to download at:
<www.ilstu.edu/~tcfreds/NCHC>

Dear Honors Student,

Thank you for contacting me about working with you on an honors contract. It is my pleasure to work with honors students on these projects, and I enjoy helping you further your learning in my class. This handout is designed to help you design and complete a project that will be meaningful and academically challenging.

As you know, an honors contract is a plan of study that by an honors student and faculty facilitator that details additional projects or assignments to be completed within the course in order to earn honors credit designation for the course. The intent of an honors contract is to promote greater challenge, depth and rigor for honors students.

Typically an honors contract requires about 20 hours of additional work above and beyond the regular course expectations. You are encouraged to develop a project that augments a specific dimension of this class. Your options for the project are varied and many, and I encourage you to be creative as you consider options.

It is important to me that your project is not simply adding a greater quantity of work to this class, rather I hope it facilitates a deeper level of inquiry into and higher levels of achievement of the objectives of the course. To help you determine a meaningful project and develop a specific plan to accomplish the project I would like for you to follow the process outlined in this document. I have illustrated the process I would like you to follow in the diagram. You will find necessary information on the attached pages.

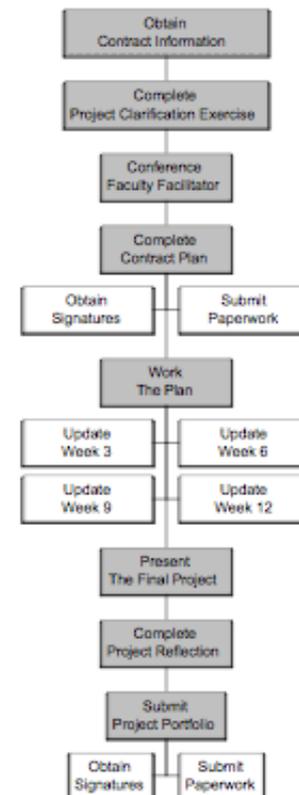
When you have completed the Project Clarification Exercise, please schedule a meeting with me. I look forward to visiting with you about your ideas for the project.

Best wishes,

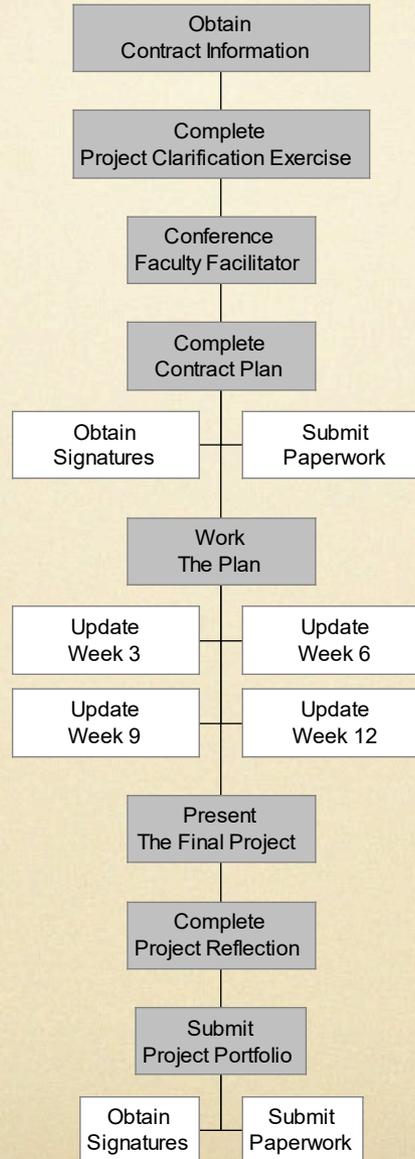
Dr. Fredstrom

fredstrom@ilstu.edu
309-438-8372 (office)

Honors Contract Process



Honors Contract Process



Project Clarification Exercise

Please complete the following tasks and schedule a meeting to discuss your plans. Answer these questions as completely as you can. The more specific you are as you plan your project, the greater the likelihood of your project being meaningful to you. After the project is finalized and the contract is established, the appropriate forms will be signed and submitted to the Honors Department.

- Please read syllabus and overview course materials. What topics do you find most interesting? Brainstorm a list of aspects of the course you find interesting? Be prepared to show me a list of many and varied ideas.
- From your list, identify a topic you would like to investigate in your honors contract.
- In what way do you intend to extend your learning in this class through investigating this topic? Will you study different content than your peers, and if so, what? Will you produce a different product than your peers, and if so, how will it be like? Will you approach your study in a different way than your peers, and if so, how?
- How will you culminate your project, through a paper (or webpage), through a presentation (live or electronic), through a performance (live or recorded), through a portfolio (in a notebook or electronic), for example? (Remember, be creative and consider many options.)
- What resources will you need to successfully complete your project?
- How would you like me to partner with you in this project?
- How will you share your findings?
- How will you know you have been successful at the completion of the project?
- What do you hope to get out of this experience?

Contract Plan

Establishing a clear plan for your honors contract is critical for your success. Please complete this contract plan thoughtfully and thoroughly. Give particular attention to clarifying your vision for the final project. When you have done this, clarify what you will have done by the end of weeks 3, 5, 9, and 12. By the end of week 15, your project must be completed, scheduled for presentation, and the Contract Completion documentation completed.

To be completed by the student.

- The purpose of this honors contract is
- I am passionate about this project because
- My final product for this contract will be
- I will present my final product in this way
- I will earn honors credit for this project when

To be completed by the faculty facilitator.

- My role in this project will be
- My vision for the student's growth through this project is

Project Schedule

By the end of week 3, I will have completed: DATE:	
By the end of week 6, I will have completed: DATE:	
By the end of week 9, I will have completed: DATE:	
By the end of week 12, I will have completed: DATE:	
By the end of week 15 I will have completed the project, the appropriate documentation, and arranged for its presentation. DATE: _____	

I will make a good faith effort to fulfill my responsibilities of this contract. I realize it is my responsibility to initiate this project and persist to completion. I inform my faculty facilitator of my progress at the end of weeks 3, 6, 9, and 12. By the end of week 15, I will have completed the requirements of this contract.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

I will make a good faith effort to support this student's inquiry by providing resources, guidance, and encouragement throughout this project.

Faculty Facilitator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Project Summary

At the completion of your project, and by the end of week 15, please write a reflective essay describing your experience. Please respond to the following:

- Briefly describe the project.
- Briefly describe how the project was presented.
- How was your learning extended through this contract?
- As a result of this project, how was your work different in this course than that of your peers?
- What benefit did you receive from this project?
- How did this project meet (or not meet) your expectations?
- How would you approach this project differently if you were starting today?

Please assemble and submit the following non-returned items:

- A copy of the Contract Plan
- A copy of the project
- A copy of the Reflection Essay

When these items have been turned in, I will submit the appropriate paperwork to the Honors Office.

Thank you.

Honors Contract Example for an Applied Lesson

Jane Hunter
Applied Trombone

1. *The purpose of this honors contract is:* to challenge my playing ability by working independently on a trombone solo that is more difficult than any other repertoire I have performed.
2. *I am passionate about this project because:* I want to stretch my musical performance to the highest of my ability.
3. *My final product for this contract will be:* I will perform my complete interpretation of my solo as my jury at the end of the semester. I will provide documentation of the guided process questions to my faculty mentor at the designated landmarks.
4. *I will present my final product in this way:* I will present my solo and explain the selection and research process to my peers in a master class session in April.
5. *I will earn honors credit for this project when:* I have successfully presented my solo for a master class with my peers and performed my jury.

	Landmark	Guided Process Questions
By the end of WEEK 3 , I will have completed:	Solo selection: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Choose 3+ solos in multiple movements.· Play through each in lessons with Dr. Petravick.· Discuss and choose which solo would best stretch my ability.	Use these questions choose a piece: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· What type of piece do I want to select? Consider the period, composer, genre, style, etc.· What aspects of my playing should I aim to challenge?· What aspects of this piece will challenge my playing ability?
By the end of WEEK 6 , I will have completed:	Solo preparation/research: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Prepare movement 1 (of 3).· Research composer.	Use these questions to practice/research: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· How should I practice to most effectively tackle the aspects of this piece that I find challenging?· When did this composer live? What are some characteristics of his/her compositional style?

<p>By the end of WEEK 9, I will have completed:</p>	<p>Solo preparation/research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Prepare movement 2 (of 3). · Polish movement 1. · Research piece. 	<p>Use these questions to practice/research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If my jury was tomorrow and I performed the first two movements of this piece, what comments would the committee give me? (Practice those elements!) · How has my playing ability been stretched so far? What do I still hope to accomplish by the end of the semester on this piece? · During what period in the composer's life was this piece written? What aspects of his/her compositional style are present in this piece? What was the composer's emotion/agenda when writing each movement of this piece?
<p>By the end of WEEK 12, I will have completed:</p>	<p>Solo preparation and presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Prepare movement 3. · Polish movements 1 & 2. · Prepare brief presentation (5 minutes) about the composer/piece to accompany my performance at master class. 	<p>Use these questions to practice and prepare your presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · How has each movement of this work stretched my playing ability in different ways? · How has my playing ability been stretched so far? What do I still hope to accomplish by the end of the semester? · How has my researched shaped my performance of this piece? · What do my peers need to know about the composer/piece to listen intelligently to my performance?
<p>By the end of WEEK 15, I will have completed:</p>	<p>Solo polishing and performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Polish all 3 movements. · Perform for jury committee. · Reflect on my learning experience. 	<p>Use these questions to polish your performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What comments did my peers provide that can help direct my polishing of this piece? · When I perform my jury, what comments will the committee be likely to provide? (Target those elements!) · How is my knowledge of this piece different than it was at week 3? · How has my playing ability been stretched by this piece? · See completion documentation for further reflection.
<p>Presentation</p>		<p>Master Class and Jury</p>

Honors Contract Example for a Critical Analysis of Experience

Bev Berkley
Beginning Conducting

1. *The purpose of this honors contract is:* to synthesize my understanding of conducting and rehearsal techniques through reflection on my ensemble directors' use of conducting and rehearsal techniques.
2. *I am passionate about this project because:* I want to see and understand how the conducting and rehearsal techniques we use and discuss in class apply in practical situations.
3. *My final product for this contract will be:* a journal of my reflections and analyses throughout the semester.
4. *I will present my final product in this way:* I will present some of the practical applications I have documented in rehearsal to my conducting class in an 8-10 minute presentation.
5. *I will earn honors credit for this project when:* I have turned in my journal of reflections and analyses to my professor and completed my presentation.

	Focus Topic	Guided Process Questions
During WEEKS 1-3 , I will analyze:	Conducting Gesture (Physical Cues): write a 2 to 3 page reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do my directors' gestures translate into sound? (List specific examples.)• What non-verbal gestures influence the group's response outside of the director's conducting?• How does the director tackle specific conducting challenges within the repertoire? (Identify and analyze.)• How does the director elicit proper vocal technique through conducting gesture?
During WEEKS 4-6 , I will analyze:	Vocal Delivery (Audible Cues): write a 2-3 page reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much time does the director spend giving instructions versus applying instructions?• What audible cues does the director use during rehearsal? (For example, vocal count-offs, counting rests, snapping the beat, etc.) Are these cues effective?• How does the tone of the director's vocal delivery affect the response of the singers?

During WEEKS 7-9 , I will analyze:	Modeling: write a 2-3 page reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In what specific instances does the director choose to model a musical passage rather than describe the desired outcome? Is this more or less effective? · What dangers are present when a director chooses to model a musical passage? · How does modeling affect the vocal technique of the singers?
During WEEKS 10-12 , I will analyze:	Warm-Ups: write a 2-3 page reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · From the warm-ups used, what do you think the director(s)'s philosophy is for warm-ups? · How do the directors multi-task to produce more effective warm-ups? · How do the warm-ups used produce better vocal technique and more musical singing in repertoire rehearsal and performance?
During WEEKS 13-15 , I will analyze:	Rehearsal Planning: write a 2-3 page reflection.	<p>Provide your supposition on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · How does the director communicate the rehearsal plan to the choir? · What musical elements does the director consider when selecting repertoire? · What elements does the director consider when deciding which pieces to rehearse and how much time should be designated to each? · How does the character of each piece of repertoire influence the overall flow of the rehearsal?
Final Product	· Final reflection (2-3 pages)	<p>Final reflection questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What is the relationship between each of the topics you have analyzed with regard to their importance to effective conducting and rehearsal techniques? · How can you apply the positive elements of conducting and rehearsal technique you have analyzed to your own conducting and teaching? · their importance to good conducting and rehearsal technique.
Presentation	· Presentation (8-10 minutes)	<p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Select 1 or 2 practical applications for each topic you've analyzed to present to your peers. · Consider what elements your peers may not have internalized in rehearsal before. <p>Survey the relationship between each theme to help your peers understand</p>

Honors Contract Example for a Research Paper

Ron Morton
Music History

1. *The purpose of this honors contract is:* to write a research paper on the beginnings of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.
2. *I am passionate about this project because:* I want to understand how the first professional orchestra began in the United States. I want to pursue a career as a professional orchestral musician, and I want to know more about the history of American orchestras.
3. *My final product for this contract will be:* a research paper (about 15 pages).
4. *I will present my final product in this way:* I will present my paper at the string departmental convocation on December 6, 2005.
5. *I will earn honors credit for this project when:* I have written my paper and presented it to the convocation.

Weeks	Assignment Description	Assessment Criterion
1-3	Search for resources in (1) periodicals, (2) books, (3) reports, (4) proceedings of meetings, (5) doctoral dissertations and master's theses, (6) audio-visual media, and (7) electronic media. Be sure that the resources you choose are scholarly. Compile a bibliography of about 20 sources you can use in your study. Unless it is unsuitable for your topic, you should have resources from five of the seven different source categories listed above. Follow the Chicago style guidelines as you format your references for the bibliography. Describe what value the source has for your study in a brief annotation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the resources scholarly?• Are there approximately 20 resources?• Are there at least five different types of sources used (or is there sufficient justification as to why not)?• Are the references formatted correctly?• Is there an annotation for the source?
4-6	Frame the purpose statement for your study within a context by presenting the problem you are studying. In this section you will help the reader understand why your study is important and what you want to discuss. This introduction to your paper should include your purpose statement and should be about 2 pages long.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the purpose of the study clearly presented?• Is the importance of the study clearly presented?• Are the ideas presented applicable to music education.• Are the ideas logically developed.• Is there evidence of independent thinking?• Does the writing reflect the author's own thought and not those borrowed from another source?• After reading this section, is reader compelled to want to know more?• Is quoted material appropriately identified?• Is the writing grammatically correct, and formatted in Chicago style?
7-9	Synthesize your resources and present your findings. This section	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the ideas being presented "taught" well?

	(about 10 pages) is the main section of your paper. In this section you will help your reader understand the various perspectives and information about your topic. Be sure to draw connections among the sources and display your independent thinking. It might be helpful to think about what you want to “teach” your reader through this section. “Teach”, through your writing, the important aspects of your topic to your reader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did I learn something when I read this writing? • Are the ideas presented applicable to music education. • Are the ideas logically developed. • Is there evidence of independent thinking? • Does the writing reflect the author’s own thought and not those borrowed from another source? • Do the ideas flow logically? • Is quoted material appropriately identified? • Is the writing grammatically correct, and formatted in Chicago style?
10-12	Summarize your findings and present possibilities for further research in the concluding section of your paper. This section should be about two pages. Also, write a 100 word or less abstract for your paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the conclusion draw the paper to a logical close? • Are ideas for further research well presented? • Does the writing reflect the author’s own thought and not those borrowed from another source? • Does the abstract accurately summarize the paper? • Is the abstract 100 words or less? • Is quoted material appropriately identified? • Is the writing grammatically correct, and formatted in Chicago style?
15	Submit a 10–15 page scholarly paper. The paper should include (1) a title page, (2) an abstract, (3) an introduction and problem statement, (4) a discussion of the problem, (5) conclusions and implications for further research, and (6) references. Be sure to include page numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the ideas completely and logically developed? • Is there evidence of independent thinking? • Has application been made to music education? • Is the focus maintained throughout the paper? • Is the paper organized and formatted correctly? • Is the writing grammatically correct? • Is the relationship between sections clear to the reader? • Is quoted material appropriately identified? • Does the writing reflect the author’s own thought and not those borrowed from another source? • Is the writer’s passion for the topic evident? • Does the reader learn something by reading this paper?
Presentation	Please prepare a presentation of your paper. Please have copies of your abstract and references ready to distribute to the convocation.	

Promoting Meaningful Experiences

Honors contract experiences are meaningful when engaged students and engaged faculty partner to complete a compelling project.

