



# Priority Standards

## D.S. Senior Capstone – Grade 12

### Distinguished Scholars Academy

The capstone project should demonstrate the critical inquiry skills developed throughout the first three years in the Distinguished Scholars Academy. Critical inquiry focuses on the creation of new ideas, perspectives, and arguments. The research process is not simply about collecting evidence or facts and then piecing them together; instead, scholars should seek relevant information and develop an informed perspective built upon—not merely derivative of—the ideas in the examined materials. As a result, the research process is recursive, meaning that scholars regularly revisit ideas, seek new information when necessary, and reconsider and refine the research questions, topics, and/or approaches.

Below is a table of the priority standards.

Priority Standards	Description
Process and Reflection Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table of contents</li> <li>• Completed and approved proposal form</li> <li>• Documentation of all formative assessments</li> <li>• Specific pieces of work selected by the scholar to represent what he or she considers to be the best showcase for his or her work. Examples might include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creative works produced as part of the inquiry process</li> <li>○ Original data created as part of the inquiry process</li> <li>○ In-class (teacher-directed) freewriting about the inquiry process</li> <li>○ Resource list</li> <li>○ Annotated bibliography of any source important to the scholar's work</li> <li>○ Photographs, charts, spreadsheets, and/or links to videos or other relevant visual research/project artifacts</li> <li>○ Draft versions of writings</li> <li>○ Notes on research completed</li> <li>○ Notes taken during inquiry process</li> <li>○ Notes in preparation for presentation and oral defense</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Documentation of student's interactions with expert adviser(s)</li> <li>• Questions asked to and feedback received from peer and adult reviewers both in the initial stages and at key points along the way in the process</li> <li>• Reflection on whether or not feedback was accepted or rejected and why</li> <li>• Reflections on the inquiry process and the scholar's progress</li> </ul>
Academic Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction Provides background and contextualizes the research question/project goal and initial student assumptions and/or hypotheses.</li> <li>• Identifies rationale for scholar's choice of inquiry.</li> </ul>

Priority Standards	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Method, Process, or Approach Explains and provides justification for the chosen method, process, or approach.</li> <li>• Results, Product, or Findings Presents the findings, evidence, results, or product.</li> <li>• Discussion, Analysis, and/or Evaluation Interprets the significance of the results, product, or findings; explores connections to original research question/project goal.</li> <li>• Discusses the implications and limitations of the research or creative work.</li> <li>• Conclusions and Future Directions Reflects on the process and how this project could impact the field and/or the scholar. Discusses possible next steps.</li> <li>• Bibliography Provides a complete list of sources cited and consulted in the appropriate disciplinary style.</li> </ul>
Presentation and Oral Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All scholars will develop a presentation of 5-10 minutes using appropriate media and deliver it to an oral defense panel of three evaluators.</li> <li>• The presentation provides an opportunity for students to present the research question/project goal, method/process, and conclusions — similar to what a university student would do at the upper undergraduate level. The presentation should focus on the scholar's initial assumptions and hypotheses/ideas, the research question/project goal decided upon, and how the information collected to address the question supports his or her scholarly work. It should also address different perspectives and how those perspectives relate to the scholar's own findings and conclusions. Scholars explain and distill their argument or aesthetic, explain the rationales for their choices, and describe their research findings to an audience of non-experts. Scholars may choose any appropriate format for their presentation as long as the presentation effectively reflects the depth of their research.</li> <li>• After the presentation, each scholar defends his or her argument/aesthetic rationale or design choices, inquiry process, use of evidence or discipline-specific information, analysis, evaluation, and conclusions through oral responses to three or four questions posed by the oral defense panel. Three of these questions must be chosen from the oral defense question list, which is provided to scholars in advance. The presentation and oral defense should take no longer than 15-20 minutes total.</li> <li>• The panel should ask one question pertaining to the scholar's research or inquiry process, one question focused on the scholar's depth of understanding, and one question about the scholar's reflection throughout the inquiry process. The fourth and any follow-up questions are at the discretion of the panel. Scholars' responses to each question should be brief and concise.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The panel will consist of the scholar's content area teacher, an additional Distinguished Scholars faculty member, and one additional adult of the scholar's choosing (preferably a faculty member in the academic discipline). Scholars are responsible for scheduling and securing panelists for their PODs.</li> </ul>