Undergraduate Signature Work

At

Duke Kunshan University

Office of Signature Work

Academic Year

2024 -2025

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Where To Get Help

Signature Work Resources Online

The Office of Signature Work (OSW) provides a central repository of Signature Work information, including updates to documents, policies, required forms, templates, tutorials, contact information, and a calendar of Signature Work-related deadlines and events that are accessible through the DKU Sakai learning management system.

Signature Work Website: http://signature-work.dukekunshan.edu.cn/
Signature Work Sakai Site (Archive): https://sakai.duke.edu/portal/site/dkusignaturework

Office of Signature Work

Office: WDR 3017

Visit the SW website to sign up for office hours. For specific questions about Signature Work, you can contact**:** signaturework@dukekunshan.edu.cn.

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Academic Year 2024-2025

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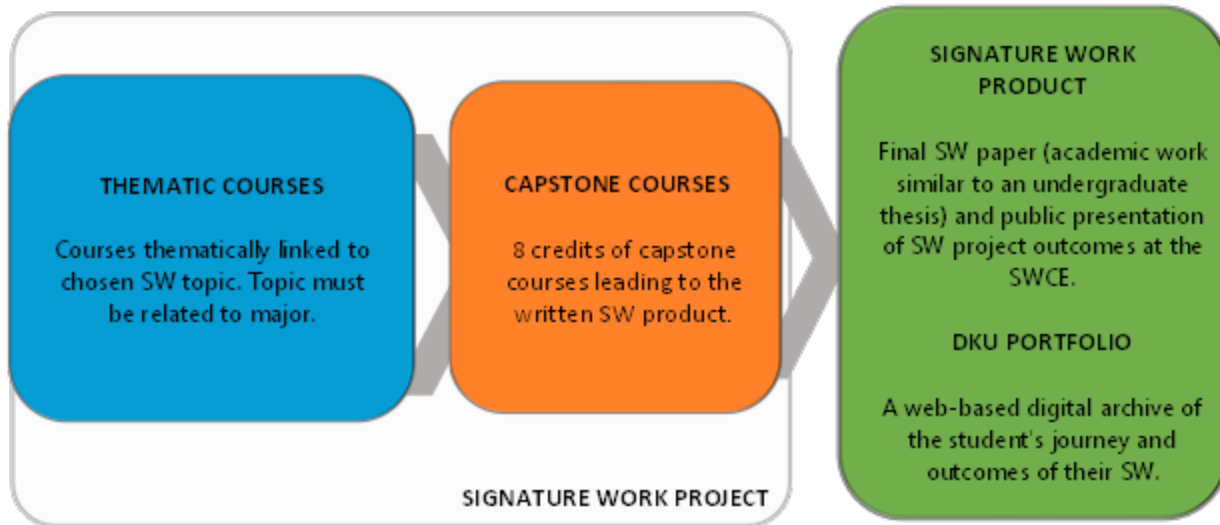
About This Document

This document contains the university-wide procedures, requirements, guidelines, and standards for the Duke Kunshan University Undergraduate Signature Work. Students must satisfy the Signature Work requirements to be approved for graduation. **Important policies related to SW expectations are found in Appendix A. Students and mentors should read them carefully to avoid unexpected grade reduction or even delayed graduation.** Students looking for specific information might wish to first check the FAQ in Appendix C.

Introduction to Signature Work

What Is Signature Work?

Signature Work calls for all students to investigate one or more questions, problems, or issues that are of particular importance to themselves and to society. Students will engage with their SW project for much of their time at DKU. In their junior year, students begin to identify a topic connected to their major and a mentor in a related field. By the end of that year, they will write a formal proposal, supported by preliminary research and approved by their mentor, that lays out their aims and methodology. In their senior year, they conduct the bulk of their original research/work, write up their findings, and present them publicly to the university community. For many students, the SW process and product represent a major step toward their post-undergraduate careers.

Though SW projects vary considerably across fields and disciplines, all fall under one of two categories: scholarly and creative/design. Scholarly projects are broadly concerned with generating original academic research (in the natural or social sciences, humanities, etc.); their chief product is a 25-30 page research paper. Creative/Design projects are primarily centered around a substantial non-academic product – a work of art, a business model, a policy paper, etc. – which will also be accompanied by a formal written statement of 15-20 pages. These products, along with a poster and video presentation, will be submitted in the student's final session at DKU as their SW Portfolio. Grades will be assigned by SW mentors and will encompass both the portfolio components and the consistency, quality, and timeliness of the student's work with the mentor up to that point. A Second Reader Review ensures quality; students whose work does not meet MOE/JED standards will be required to submit revisions. Exceptional work may be nominated for SW Distinction, an academic honor bestowed at graduation.

THEMATIC COURSES

Courses thematically linked to chosen SW topic. Topic must be related to major.

CAPSTONE COURSES

8 credits of capstone courses leading to the written SW product.

SIGNATURE WORK PROJECT

SIGNATURE WORK PRODUCT

Final SW paper (academic work similar to an undergraduate thesis) and public presentation of SW project outcomes at the SWCE.

DKU PORTFOLIO

A web-based digital archive of the student's journey and outcomes of their SW.

In curricular terms, SW has two major components. First, students will identify three thematically-linked courses at DKU or Duke, drawing from their interdisciplinary courses, disciplinary courses, or electives. Second, students will take 8 credits of Capstone courses one-on-one with their mentor, during which they will complete much of the actual work of their SW projects.

Changes to Signature Work in AY 2024-25

(This section is primarily intended for mentors who have previous experience with signature work. Students are encouraged to skip to the next section.)

1. The experiential learning requirement is suspended indefinitely, though SELF funding will still be available to help fund students' off-campus summer research (at Duke and in China)
2. A new "Creative/Design" option alongside the preexisting "Scholarly" option. Creative/Design projects will produce a primary object (e.g. artwork, business model, policy paper, app, etc.) alongside a shorter academic paper justifying it.
3. Alongside the preexisting 4+4 credit model for Capstone courses, students now have the option to split their first 4 credits into two 2-credit courses (2+2+4). Students may choose to take *a maximum of* 2-credits in the spring of their junior year. Capstone courses are no longer required to be sequential.
4. Capstones will no longer be given a temporary Z-grade. Instead, individual Capstones (4+4 or 2+2+4) will be given letter grades by the mentor, resulting in a more flexible grading system. The final 4-credit capstone (496) will only be graded when the student submits their final products to the SW Office at the end of Session 3.
5. Final papers submitted late will not be eligible for Distinction. Papers submitted 7 calendar days late will result in an automatic 10 pt deduction in the Capstone 496 grade, with another 10 pts lost per additional 5 days.
6. The Second Reader process is expanded and strengthened, such that Second Readers can now require students to make changes to SW products they deem inadequate, regardless of the grades given by the mentor.

7. The SW Proposal is shorter and simpler, and incorporates both RCR Certification and the Mentor Agreement (which is now simply a signature). There will only be one Proposal deadline in the spring, unlike in the past, when there were two deadlines depending on when students were at Duke.
8. The Signature Work Narrative (reflections on Thematic Classes) and Experiential Learning Reflection are eliminated. Material related to students' reflections on the SW process are now to be incorporated into the SW paper itself.

Signature Work Learning Outcomes

Students completing Signature Work will become independent thinkers and innovators who can develop and manage the entire critical and creative problem-solving process. Upon successful completion of the Signature Work, a student will be able to

- Identify a significant question, problem, or issue in their field of interest
- Articulate the significance of the project proposed
- Design a fitting and innovative approach to addressing the identified topic. Specifically, students will be able to
    - Articulate a strategy and a feasible plan to achieve their project goals
    - Develop a study plan that lays out in detail strategies, resources, and a timeline that supports the acquisition and application of essential and relevant knowledge and skills
- Apply research and relevant critical skills to efficiently implement a project:
    - Identify, select, and apply methodologies
    - Integrate various resources
    - Manage a complex project
- For Scholarly Projects: Reflect upon, synthesize, and advance scholarly work to prepare a significant scholarly written product
- For Creative/Design Projects: Study, analyze, and synthesize previous models to generate something original and practicable within its field/genre; describe the motivations, methodologies, and outcomes of your work to a non-specialized audience
- Communicate their SW product through appropriate channels to a broader audience:
    - Learn and apply different formats to deliver information appropriate for the audience
    - Articulate what they have learned and accomplished by aligning their practice and experience in the SW project with DKU institutional and program learning outcomes
- Demonstrate a high level of professional ethics and academic integrity

Overview of the Signature Work Process and Requirements

Phase 1	SW Preparation & Proposal
	During the end of the sophomore year and beginning of the junior year, students will prepare for SW by doing preliminary research on their subject and searching for a faculty mentor. They will then do a formal SW Proposal for their mentor's approval.
Phase 2	Signature Work Portfolio Documentation, Integration, Reflection

	The SW Portfolio is an online Box folder shared between the mentor and mentee, in which students synthesize, reflect on, and document their journey through SW. The completed portfolio is the documentation archive with all the requirements listed in the three sections below. The portfolio can also include supplemental material such as: multimedia documentation, research journal, etc.
Phase 3	**Signature Work Project** Research, Process, Application
	How did you apply what you have learned? What did you do? What outcomes have you produced?
	Required: • Signature Work Project Proposal • 3 Thematic courses • 8 Credits of Capstone courses • Basic RCR Certification (Prerequisite for Capstone courses and SRS, SWRG and SELF grants) • Accepted IRB protocol if required for the SW research

	Signature Work Product Intellectual Statement, Evidence	**Signature Work Final Presentation** Public Presentation and Documentation
Phase 4	Who is your audience and what do you want to communicate to them? How would you describe and explain your project? What are your findings and outputs?	How did different components of your process fit together? How does your work relate to your personal and professional goals?
	Required: • Scholarly Paper*: An academic written product similar to a UG thesis, e.g. a research paper 25-30 pages long. • Creative/Design SW products: A substantial non-academic product – a work of art, a business model, a policy paper, etc. – also accompanied by a formal written statement of 15-20 pages. • Both paper types include a short SW narrative that explains your SW project and how your thematic courses are linked to the SW topic.	**Required:** • Public presentation at the end of year SW Conference & Exhibition (SWCE). Formats include presentation session, poster session or creative exhibition • For the SWCE public website and catalogue: Digital poster and video introducing the SW project

Example Projects:	Experimental and Applied Science Research, Theoretical Science Research, Field Research, Policy Proposals, White Papers, Community Outreach, Archival Research, Theoretical Research, Creative Writing, Business Plan, Innovation Proposal, Application Design, Documentary, Film, Performance, and Art and Design Production
Notes:	*Published journal articles and conference papers can be incorporated into the Signature Work Project, but each alone CANNOT fulfill the Signature Work Paper requirement. **The bulk**

	of the work submitted for the Signature Work project must have been done _for the purpose_ of Signature Work.

Individual or Team-Based Signature Work Projects

Signature Work projects can be either individual projects or team-based projects.

Individual Signature Work Projects

- Students conducting individual SW projects can have a single mentor or two co-mentors. Both co-mentors must be full-time DKU faculty members and one will be the primary mentor.
- Students can independently form their own project ideas or work on projects inspired or guided by faculty research or research lab/center projects.
- Projects can happen in collaboration with outside organizations, institutions, or corporations but must be ultimately approved and guided by a full-time DKU faculty mentor.
- Students are responsible for providing any legal, IP, NDA, IRB, and IACUC documents needed for their project. These documents must be submitted as part of the SW Portfolio.

Team-Based Signature Work Projects

Team-based projects follow the same guidelines as individual projects in addition to:
- Student teams should have at most 5 students.
- Students in the same major or different majors can collaborate on one project.
- While students in a team work collaboratively on a single SW project, each student must have an individual and distinct SW product and SW portfolio.
- Student roles and contributions in a team-based project must be defined in the Team Agreement.
- The Team Agreement does not replace the individual student SWPP. Each student is still expected to submit a SWPP.
- Students in a team should coordinate their individual goals, processes, and experiences with their teammates under the guidance of their mentors or co-mentors.
- The mentor or co-mentors must approve any modifications to the team agreement. Modifications may include, but are not limited to, student roles, contributions, or withdrawal.

Signature Work Milestones and Timeline

The tables below summarize the Signature Work milestones that students are required to follow. For specific due dates, please reference the Signature Work Academic Calendar on your graduating class's section of http://signature-work.dukekunshan.edu.cn/ or contact the Office of Signature Work. Students planning to graduate in the Fall should consult the appropriate section of the Policies.

Signature Work Milestones

Year	Deliverable	Due
Junior	SW Project Proposal	Submitted together as a single package End of Session 3 in junior year (including students at Duke)

	Team Agreement	If applicable, submitted along with Project Proposal
	Start SW Portfolio	Session 4 in junior year after approved SWPP
Senior	Last Opportunity to Request Mentor Change	Start of Session 1 in senior year
	Last Opportunity to Change Project Proposal	Start of Session 1 in senior year
	Signature Work Product & SW Portfolio	End of Session 3 in senior year
	Second Review of SW Products	Mini-term through early Session 4 in senior year
	SW Conference & Exhibition	Middle of Session 4 in senior year

Signature Work Timeline

The timeline below summarizes the process students should follow to complete their Signature Work successfully. For specific due dates, please reference the SW Academic Calendar on the DKU SW site for your graduating class or contact the Office of Signature Work.

Sophomore Year

- Students should attend annual events hosted by the Office of Signature Work, such as the SW Fair and information sessions. These events introduce the SW process and resources and encourage students to discover faculty research and research center-led research and practice opportunities.
- Students can contact Academic Advisors, Major Conveners, and other faculty for guidance and suggestions on possible topics, mentors, and resources for SW.
- Students are encouraged to conduct initial conversations with potential mentors about potential topics throughout their sophomore year. Students are responsible for taking the initiative to match with a mentor. The Signature Work Office will not assign mentors to students.
- Students planning to go to Duke in the fall of their junior year may wish to discuss their research plans for that period ahead of time with their mentor.

Summer Break (Rising Junior)

- Students should continue developing their SW topic in preparation for finding a mentor and submitting the formal SWPP in their junior year.
- Students may wish to look into SRS opportunities to help kickstart their SW and connect with a potential mentor.

Junior Year

- Students further explore and fine-tune their ideas with purpose. This work is done through continued conversations on topics with potential mentors.
- Students should prepare their SW project proposal and submit it to potential mentors. The SW project proposal is submitted if the potential mentor agrees to mentor the project and student.
- Students should work with mentors to choose 3 thematic courses. Thematic courses must be taken by session 3 of senior year.

- A completed RCR certificate is submitted as part of the combined SW project proposal. The RCR is a prerequisite for signing up for Capstones courses, so <u>students wishing to take 2-credits of CAPSTONE495 in their junior year will need to finish their RCR</u> *before* <u>signing up for classes in the fall.</u>
- Students will begin their SW Portfolio and start documenting their progress.
- If the SW project research requires IRB approval, the student must submit a protocol to the IRB committee and receive acceptance before starting any research requiring it.
- **Mentors and students are suggested to meet every two weeks throughout the academic year to ensure sustained progress**.
- Students needing additional research funding for SW should apply for the SWRG, Signature Fund, and SELF grants.

Summer Break (Rising Senior)

- Students should continue working on their SW based on mentor guidance.

Senior Year

- **Reminder:** The start of Session 1 in senior year is the last opportunity for a change in mentor or SWPP.
- If the mentor and mentee choose the 4+4 Capstone course format, both 4-credit Capstones will be taken in the senior year. Capstone courses cannot be taken in the same session, nor can they be taken in session 4.
- If the mentor and mentee choose the 2+2+4 Capstone course format, the final 4-credit Capstone course will be completed in the senior year. Capstone courses cannot be taken in the same session or in session 4.
- ==**SW MUST be completed and submitted at the end of Session 3 in the senior year.**== This includes the SW product and the SW Portfolio. For final submission dates, refer to the annual SW Academic Calendar.
- Following submission, the mentor will evaluate and grade the submitted work. A Second Reader - a faculty member in a broadly related field – will simultaneously review the submitted work and confirm whether it meets minimal acceptable academic standards. Either the mentor or the second reader may at this time nominate the work for Distinction.
- Students whose work is judged unacceptable by either their mentor or second reader will have 2 weeks to resubmit edited work that responds to the comments.
- Students whose work is deemed acceptable by the mentor and second reader will have no opportunity to revise submitted work, regardless of the grade assigned by the mentor.
- SW students will present their posters, videos, and public presentations at the SWCE, which will be held in the middle of Session 4 in senior year.

Signature Work Supervisory Roles

Signature Work Mentor

Mentorship between a mentor and student begins with accepting and signing the SW Project Proposal. It continues to the SW project's conclusion, including the SW product submission and public presentation at the senior end-of-year SWCE. SW mentors must be full-time DKU faculty. Duke University faculty may not serve as SW mentors. All students must have mentorship throughout the SW process. It is the student's responsibility to seek out mentorship. Mentorship should be mutually agreed upon by both student and faculty.

If a student cannot find a mentor on time, the Office of Signature Work may provide guidance and suggestions of faculty who might be a good match as a mentor but are not obligated to intervene on the student's behalf in the mentor-matching process.

Mentor Responsibilities

Mentors are obligated to guide mentees throughout the entire SW process. These obligations include the following:

- **Defining a Topic:** Guide mentee in identifying, clarifying, and framing their SW project direction.
- **Research Planning:** The mentor should support the mentee in selecting their research methods and help them assess the feasibility of their research plan.
- **Time Management:** Schedule regular meetings and check-ins with the mentee, ideally in person during the academic year and remotely during vacations and while the mentee is at Duke University or is on an official study abroad. Keep the mentee on task for the timely submission of SW deliverables.
- **Academic Supervision:** Support mentee in SW-related planning throughout the SW process.
  - Approve all deliverables, forms, documents, and applications.
  - Support mentee in identifying appropriate thematic courses, research and practice resources, and opportunities.
- **Assessment:** Provide feedback and evaluation of the mentee's work in the final stage of their SW process.
  - Serve as the instructor of record for mentee's capstone courses.
  - Develop course plan, milestones, and syllabi with mentee for Capstone Courses.
  - Provide timely feedback to mentee on the written SW paper, DKU Portfolio narrative, and SW project output. Guide mentee toward concluding their SW project.
  - Grade mentee's SW project.
- **Signature Work Conference and Exhibition (SWCE):** Support and advise mentee in preparation for the SWCE.
  - Provide feedback on posters, videos, presentations, exhibition layouts, etc.
  - Coordinate with the Office of Signature Work and the SWCE Committee on public presentation needs of student projects (space, time slots, equipment, etc.).
  - Attend the SWCE in support of mentee.
- **Point of Contact:** Serve as the main point of contact for the mentee on SW-related information.
  - Attending the SW Fair and the SWCE with the mentee is recommended.
  - Stay updated with any updates or learn more about SW by attending the Faculty SW information sessions at the start of each session.
  - Take initiative in contacting the Office of Signature Work when questions arise about policies and procedures. *Please do not direct the mentee to the Office of Signature Work to retrieve information on policies and procedures on the mentor's behalf*.
- **Coordination:** Clearly define mentorship roles in all co-mentoring scenarios.
  - Coordinate with other mentors in shared team-based SW projects.
  - Coordinate with other mentors in co-mentored SW projects.

Mentee Responsibilities

Students are responsible for taking initiative and ownership of their SW process. These responsibilities include the following:

- **Mentor-Matching:** Actively seek out mentorship on time. The Office of Signature Work, Academic Advising, Major Conveners, and other faculty and staff may provide suggestions and guidance in the early stages of SW. Still, ultimately, the student is responsible for seeking out potential mentors.
- **Self-Directed Scholarly Research and Creative/Design Production:** SW is characterized as faculty-guided, student-directed independent research at the undergraduate level. What this means:
  - ***Defining a Topic:*** Take initiative in defining your SW project. Different from coursework, students should not depend on faculty to assign topics or directions for their SW.
  - ***Independent Research and Production:*** Be self-motivated to define the constructs of your research or creative project. This means practicing critical and independent thinking, actively participating in research planning, and carrying out the necessary steps to complete the project.
  - ***Time Management:*** Actively participate in project management and follow through. Work with mentors to set milestones and deliverables. While mentors should be readily available to students, the mentor is not responsible for ensuring that the student progresses with their project.
- **Signature Work Planning:** Take initiative in managing your SW requirements and activities throughout the SW process.
  - ***Official Documents***: Submit all required SW forms (Project Proposal, Team Agreement, etc.) on time. Your SW mentor must review all official forms before submission to the university. Be mindful of completing forms early to ensure your mentor has time to review your materials thoroughly. Late submissions are not the mentor's responsibility and will disqualify you for SW Graduation of Distinction.
  - ***Thematic Courses:*** Plan with your mentor and consult your academic advisor to complete thematic courses.
  - ***SW Portfolio:*** Utilize the SW portfolio throughout the SW process to deliver SW deliverables to your mentor on time.
  - ***Submissions & Deliverables:*** Throughout the SW process, students are responsible for providing mentors with timely evidence of their work and progress for feedback before university submission deadlines. Work in progress includes tangible research, writing samples and drafts, prototypes, and other deliverables.
  - ***Conference and Exhibition:*** All students must present their work at the SWCE. Attendance at the event is mandatory for graduation. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- **Communication:** Students are responsible for ensuring smooth communication with mentors, team members, and the university throughout the entire SW process.
  - ***Mentors:*** Respond to mentors on time. This includes timely replying to emails, attending scheduled meetings, notifying mentors of delays and changes, etc.
  - ***Teams:*** Coordinate with teammates to complete individual and group goals.
  - ***Information:*** Attend the SWCE, SW Fair, SW seminars, and SW information sessions.
  - ***Questions:*** You are responsible for ensuring you understand all aspects of SW. If questions arise, your mentor is your first point of contact.

Co-Mentoring

In some cases, students may find having two mentors with diverse expertise beneficial. In such cases, students must submit a SW Project Proposal signed by both Co-Mentors. A student can have up to two faculty mentors.

External Experts

Students may seek expertise from external experts who play advisory roles and provide supplemental guidance for their SW. External experts can be faculty at Duke University or other universities and professionals from external institutions, organizations, and corporations. However, all SW mentors/co-mentors must be full-time DKU faculty.

If a student wants advice from an external expert, they will first need approval from their SW mentor or co-mentors. The student must promptly relay feedback from external experts to their SW mentor or co-mentors. External experts may never take on the role of SW mentor and may be used only for advisory guidance.

Second Reader

A second reader is a faculty member in a field broadly related to the student's SW project. They are assigned by the division chairs in consultation with the OSW, *not* chosen by the student. Their task is to ensure that the student's submitted work meets minimal academic standards in the field, and to note work worthy of Distinction. Work flagged as inadequate by the second reader must be revised; students who fail to resubmit their work with adequate revisions may not meet their requirements for graduation. See *Second Reader Review* section for more details.

Thematic Courses

Definition

As part of the SW project, students must identify three courses that are thematically linked to their SW topic. *The topic of the SW project must be aligned with the student's major*.

Thematic courses must be chosen in consultation with the mentor. Students are recommended to consider thematic course combinations as early as possible after submission of the SW project proposal.

Timeline

Thematic courses may be chosen from previous, current, and future academic years beginning freshman year Session 1. All thematic courses must be completed by the end of senior year Session 3. It is recommended that thematic course selection be discussed with the mentor before the SW project proposal is submitted.

Criteria

- Thematic courses may be selected from any credit-bearing course taken at DKU, including courses not required for a student's major.
- Students may also select courses taken over the summer or during study abroad programs at Duke University or elsewhere.

- Credit-bearing independent study courses and up to one mini-term course may be used as a thematic course.
- Online courses not taken at DKU or Duke and PE courses cannot be used as thematic courses.

Assessment

For all courses designated as thematic courses, students are expected to articulate in their SW Portfolio why those particular courses were chosen and how they support the SW project. *See the SW Portfolio section* for more information.

Resources

- 2024-25 UG Bulletin is available here.

Signature Work Portfolio

Definition

The SW Portfolio is a collection of artifacts documenting the entire SW process. It is an online Box folder shared between the mentor and mentee, in which students synthesize, reflect on, and document their journey through SW. Students are expected to produce their SW Portfolio following the formatting guidelines provided by the Office of Signature Work. Collectively, it is a digital archive of SW at DKU. The portfolio also includes the final written SW paper, SW Paper abstract, SWCE materials, and other documentation, as noted in the table below. Every student is expected to produce their own SW Portfolio, regardless of whether they work individually or in a team. The SW portfolio will be graded as part of the overall SW grade.

The purpose of the DKU Portfolio includes the following:

- Provide students with an opportunity to reflect on the entire SW experience.
- Provide an organized overview of student work so the mentor can evaluate their SW.
- Provide students with an integrated online archive and process documentation by which they can introduce their work to potential employers or graduate program admissions committees.

Timeline

Students will begin their SW portfolio during the spring term of their junior year.

Criteria

SW Portfolio Box Format and Required Materials	
Required	**Optional**
- The SWPP: The Signature Work Project Proposal (PDF) - RCR Certificate (PDF) - IRB Protocol and Approval if Required (PDF) - The SW paper abstract (PDF)	Any additional materials such as multimedia documentation, research journal, sketches, prototypes, or more can be added to the DKU portfolio.

- Documentation of the Creative/Design product if the project was a Creative/Design SW type - The Final SW paper (PDF) - A list of 3 thematic courses. - A digital poster of the SW project (PDF). This will also be used for the SWCE. - A 3–5 min video presentation of the student's SW. This will also be used for SWCE.	
SW Portfolio Box Format and Folder Structure	
Formatting instructions will be provided in each SW Portfolio Box folder	

Assessment

Assessment of the SW portfolio will be based on completing the requirements listed above.

Signature Work Conference and Exhibition

Definition

The SWCE is an annual event held by the Office of Signature Work that showcases the SW projects produced by the graduating seniors. Students are required to publicly present their SW project at the SWCE to fulfill the SW requirements to graduate.

Teams can participate as a group or as individuals for team-based SW projects. If presenting as a group, each student will represent their individual work and contributions towards the team project.

Timeline

The submission deadline for materials for the senior end-of-year SWCE will be at least one month before the event. The SWCE takes place in session 4 of each year.

Criteria

All students must participate in the SWCE event to fulfill their SW requirements for graduation.

- All students need to submit the following components for the SWCE website and print catalogue:
    - A digital poster
    - Project overview (submitted in final Formstack)
    - A 3-5 min video presentation

- All students must choose 1 from the following 3 presentation styles for the SWCE event:
    - Presentation / Talk

- o Poster Session
- o Exhibition

Assessment

The SW mentor will submit a final assessment and evaluation to the Office of Signature Work. The SWCE grade is part of the overall SW grade as reflected in the Capstone course grades.

Resources

- Poster templates and examples are available on the SW website.
- Video presentation examples are available on the SW website.

The Signature Work Product: Scholarly Paper & Creative/Design Explanatory Text

Definition

Each student will produce a final academic written work similar to a UG thesis that synthesizes and concludes the outcomes of their SW project. There are two types of written components, depending on which type of project students choose: scholarly papers or creative/design explanatory texts. Scholarly SW papers are broadly concerned with generating original academic research. Creative/Design SW explanatory texts accompany a substantial non-academic product – a work of art, a business model, a policy paper, etc. Both types include a short SW narrative that explains your SW project and how your thematic courses are linked to the SW topic.

Scholarly SW products consist of this paper, the final public presentation of the SW project, and the SW portfolio. Creative/Design products consist of a primary product, an explanatory text, he final public presentation of the SW project, and the SW portfolio. **This section will focus on the Scholarly Paper and Creative/Design Explanatory Text**. See the *Signature Work Conference and Exhibition* section for more information on the final presentation. See the *Signature Work Portfolio* section for more information on the portfolio. See the *Capstone 496 Evaluation: Creative/Design Projects* for more information about those products.

The SW paper is the student's individual investigation, expression, and answer to the question they proposed in their SWPP. If the student is part of a team-based SW project, the creation of an individual SW product is required and will be based on the outcomes of the team-based SW project.

Timeline

Students should begin work on their SW paper as early as the summer break between junior and senior year and no later than the beginning of the senior year. All SW papers must be completed and submitted for grading by the end of senior year Session 3, following the deadline set by the SW Office.

Criteria

The SW product should satisfy all requirements listed below:

- The SW paper must be a scholarly or creative/design written work at the undergraduate level. The SW paper should be the student's independent work.
- **The SW paper should follow the appropriate guidelines and standards set forth by the student's division/major**. Guidelines from divisions/majors may be available on the SW website.
- **The SW paper should meet the requirements and criteria set forth by the mentor.**
- The SW paper must meet all the requirements set by the university and the Chinese Ministry of Education.
- Scholarly SW products are 25-30 page research papers.
- Creative/Design SW products consist of a substantial non-academic product and a 15- 20-page formal written statement.
- Both scholarly and creative/design papers need to include a section of 1000 – 2000 words for the SW narrative that articulates how the 3 thematic courses and the outcomes of the capstone courses contribute to the students' SW project. Students should reflect on the SW experience and how it prepared them for future goals.
- For team-based SW, the SW paper must clearly describe the student's individual contributions to the greater team project.

Document Formatting and Content Instructions

All SW products must follow the below document formatting:

- Pages: 1" margins
- Font: Times New Roman, Garamond, Cambria, Arial, size 12
- Line Spacing: 1.5
- Follow the standard academic style (e.g., MLA, Chicago, APA) appropriate to the discipline.

These content sections are required for all SW papers, though each division and major may have variations in structure and organization. Students should consult with their mentors about variations.

- Title Page
- Acknowledgments
- Abstract
- 5 Keywords that describe your SW
- Introduction with statement of purpose/research questions (as appropriate)
- Background / Context (e.g., literature review)
- The Project: process and outcomes (e.g., research methodology and results)
- Discussion / Reflection / Implications
- Conclusion
- References / Bibliography / Works Cited
- SW Narrative
- Appendices (as needed)

Assessment

The SW mentor will submit a final assessment and evaluation to the Office of Signature Work, as the major component of the Capstone 496 course grade.

Resources

- Signature Work paper templates are available on the SW website.

Capstone Courses and Evaluation

Definition

The 8-credit Signature Work project consists of Capstone courses taken as two 4-credit courses *or* two 2-credit courses and one 4-credit course, along with the final public presentation of the final Signature Work product and other outcomes. Capstone courses allow mentors and mentees to focus on concluding the SW research and creating SW products. The ultimate goals of Capstone courses are:

1. For the student: Completing the SW project, SW product, and SW Portfolio for submission.
2. For the mentor: Evaluating the student's SW and submitting a final grade.

The nature of the capstone courses is like independent study, where the mentor and mentee agree on the frequency and format of the meetings. This structure applies to team projects as well as individual signature work. Mentors should work with mentees to determine the best way to structure the capstone courses, based on SW and other academic needs.

==**All students must complete all 8 credits of Capstone courses to graduate. If a student receives a failing grade (F) in any Capstone, they will need to retake it before they will be allowed graduate.**==

Timeline

Mentors and mentees can choose from two Capstone course formats:

- Two 4-credit courses (CAPSTONE495 + CAPSTONE496) taken in that order in any of the first 3 sessions of the senior year.
- Or two 2-credit courses (CAPSTONE495A + CAPSTONE495B) and one 4-credit course (CAPSTONE 496). CAPSTONE495A may optionally be taken in the spring of the student's junior year. The rest must be taken in the first three sessions of the senior year.

Capstone courses cannot be taken in the same session, **and all Capstone courses must be completed before the end of senior year Session 3**. Capstones also act as a grade submission mechanism for the Signature Work Project, Product, and SW Portfolio. Starting with Academic Year 2024-25, mentors will grade each Capstone separately, rather than giving one grade at the end of the process.

Criteria

- **Capstone course prerequisites: Students must pass the basic Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training provided by the CITI Program.**

- Mentor and mentee should collaboratively design a syllabus including course structure and rubric for Capstone courses.

*Please note that students who wish to take a 2-credit Capstone in the spring of their junior year will need to have completed their RCR training *before* they register for it.

The following grade indicators should be followed to grade the SW project, as outlined in the DKU UG SW Capstone Evaluation Guide, which is available on the SW website.

Indicator	Grade Range
Excellent	A
Good	B
Acceptable	C
Poor	D

A student doing poor work would receive a "D" range (D+, D, D-) or above. Grades in the "D" range may be used to satisfy the SW requirement for graduation, but they count towards the maximum of 8 credits allowed with "D" grades to graduate. A grade below the "D" range is considered unsatisfactory and is marked as fail.

Capstone 495 Assessment

Students taking Capstone 495, whether as a 4-credit course in their senior year or two 2-credit courses, one of which may be taken in their junior year, will be engaged in the Signature Work *process*. They will be reviewing their field-specific literature, setting up and conducting research in the field or laboratory, compiling and analyzing data, planning and executing creative projects, etc. Throughout, they should be checking in regularly with their mentor and meeting progress milestones/deadlines *as set collaboratively by the mentor and student.* **It is recommended that mentors and students meet at minimum once every two weeks during Capstones.**

No one universal rubric can cover the wide variety of possible student paths through Capstone 495. It is up to each mentor to determine their own rubric and communicate their expectations to the student. Additionally, students who take 2-credits of Capstone 495 in their third year may require different benchmarks and standards than students to who take it for 4 credits in their fourth year. That said, some questions that mentors may want to bear in mind include:

- Had the student finished their prerequisites (SW Proposal and RCR, IRB or IACUC approval if required, methodologically-necessary thematic classes) in a timely fashion, so as not to delay the start of their Capstone 495 work?
- Did the student make their regular meetings with the mentor? Was the student prepared for these meetings? Could the student provide evidence for their continued progress?
- Did the student meet milestones/deadlines as set in collaboration with the mentor?
- Was the student meaningfully responsive to mentor feedback?
- Was the student following the procedures laid out in their SW Proposal? If not, could they provide a sufficient justification for the changes?

Note that if students take 495 as two 2-credit courses, the mentor will assign grades to them separately. Each grade should be tailored to the sort of progress students expect to make in that session.

Capstone 496 Assessment

If Capstone 495 is about assessing the Signature Work *process*, Capstone 496 is for assessing the SW *outcomes*: the *product* and *portfolio* (with a bit of process left in). Given the wide range of possible SW products, the prevailing academic standards for the student's field of study should guide the mentor's assessment.

Uniquely, C**apstone 496 is not graded at the conclusion of the term when it was taken**. Instead, the mentor will submit their grade after the student has submitted their final product and portfolio to the Signature Work Office. For students taking 496 in Session 3, this will not be a large difference. For students taking 496 in Session 2, however, that means the grade will be submitted roughly two months after the conclusion of the course.

Given that Capstone 496 is intended to be the time when the student finishes their SW products, students who take 496 in Session 2 should have a clear plan for how they intend to use that time. Students are **highly discouraged** from using 496 solely to conduct research; trying to write an entire academic paper in Session 3 while taking a full course load is not a recipe for success.

Beyond the SW product, the 496 grade should also reflect the SW Portfolio: whether students uploaded all their required materials on time, and whether those materials meet basic academic standards. Mentors might also consider the 496 process: whether students continued meeting with them on schedule, met their internally-set deadlines, etc. (See Capstone 495 Assessment for more guidance on process.)

A suggested grade breakdown:

Scholarly Project		Creative/Design Project	
Process	5%	Process	5%
Portfolio	5%	Portfolio	5%
Paper	90%	Creative/Design Product	45%
		Explanatory Text	45%

In addition to giving a letter grade, mentors will also judge SW products as falling into one of three categories:

1. **Adequate** to minimal academic standards and worthy of Distinction (see *Graduation with Signature Work Distinction* in the Policies section)
2. **Adequate** to minimal academic standards
3. **Inadequate** to minimal academic standards

(Note that a mentor might give a student a passing grade for Capstone 496 and still judge their product(s) Inadequate to minimum academic standards.)

Student work judged Inadequate will trigger a review process identical to that of the Second Reader Review. See the *Second Reader Review* section for more information.

Scholarly Projects: Academic Paper (25-30 pages)

Mentors are expected to have the disciplinary knowledge and experience to evaluate their mentee's submitted work. They should also have seen one or more drafts prior to the submission of the final paper, and have a sense of how the student's work progressed to its conclusion.

Academic divisions and some individual majors have prepared detailed templates for their SW students. These are available on the SW Website. As they consult these rubrics and the Criteria listed above, mentors may wish to consider:

- To what extent has the student followed the appropriate rubric? Are there necessary components missing?
- Is the student appropriately citing sources? Are they consistently following one citation style?
- Has the student followed their agreement with their mentor regarding the (minimal) use of AI-generated or augmented text?
- Does the paper incorporate a 1000-2000 word narrative in which the student reflects on their SW process?
- Does the paper represent original work? Does it make an argument and articulate its stakes?
- Is the paper structured so that its sections flow from one to another? Are the individual sections incorporated into a larger claim?
- Is the paper written in adequately formal, grammatically-correct English, such that its meanings are not obscured by its language? Has it been proofread?

Creative/Design Projects: Creative/Design Product + Explanatory Text (15-20 pages)

The primary product of Creative/Design projects can be a whole range of things: from artistic exhibitions, digital media, creative writing, and performance, to public policy initiatives, marketing strategies, and apps. Alongside the primary product, students must also submit a Formal Explanatory Text of 15-20 pages, in which they explain the **background**, **procedures**, and **outcomes** of their project.

Evaluating **Creative/Design primary products** will be extremely dependent on the genre/form of that product. In general terms, mentors may want to ask:

- Did the student achieve their goals with the project? Is their finished product of adequate size and scope for the culminating work of their senior year?
- Does the work *work* as an example of its form/genre? Does it evince creativity, originality, thoughtfulness, careful planning, incisive ideas, mastery of craft, practicability, or whatever other qualities speak to success in that form/genre?
- Does it follow the standards and best practices of its form/genre? Is it polished and complete?

Explanatory Texts are basically shorter versions of the Scholarly Papers described in the previous section, and should be evaluated in much the same way. They should follow the basic structure described in *The Signature Work Product*

section, being sure to cover the background, procedures, and outcomes of the project. Although they are not expected to be argumentative essays, they should still confirm to basic standards of academic writing.

Resources

- For detailed evaluation guidelines, see the *DKU UG SW Capstone Evaluation Guide* available on the SW website.

Second Reader Review

After a student has submitted their final Signature Work products – the Scholarly Paper or Creative/Design Product + Explanatory Text – these will be passed on to a Second Reader, a faculty member in a field broadly related to the student's SW project. Second Readers are assigned by the division chairs in consultation with the OSW, *not* chosen by the student. Second Readers are there to ensure academic standards; they are not responsible for SW grades, which are entirely up to the mentor (barring late penalties).

After receiving SW products, the Second Reader will have two weeks to evaluate and comment on the products, either via liner notes or one final end note. Second Readers are encouraged to focus on *major* errors/omissions/etc. Second Readers will judge SW products as falling into one of three categories:

1. **Adequate** to minimal academic standards and worthy of Distinction (see *Graduation with Signature Work Distinction* in the Policies section)
2. **Adequate** to minimal academic standards
3. **Inadequate** to minimal academic standards

Students whose work is judged Adequate need do nothing further. They will receive the Second Reader's comments for their own benefit, but are not required to resubmit. (Grades cannot be improved by resubmitting at this point.)

Students whose work is judged Inadequate have a further two weeks to make the edits required by the Second Reader. When they resubmit their work, the Second Reader will once again judge it Adequate or Inadequate. (Grades cannot be improved by resubmitting at this point either.)

If the student's work is judged to still be Inadequate after resubmission, or if the student did not resubmit work by the resubmission deadline, it will be evaluated by a panel convened and headed by the VCAA. That panel may include the mentor and second reader, division chairs, major conveners, Director of Signature Work, etc. If that panel agrees with the judgment that the submitted work does not meet minimum academic standards, **it is empowered to set the student's CAPSTONE 496 grade to an F**, necessitating that the student retake it the following term.

Appendix A: Undergraduate Studies and Signature Work Policies

Academic Integrity

All DKU students are responsible for adhering to the Duke Kunshan University (DKU) Community Standard as set forth in the DKU Student Handbook and the DKU Undergraduate Programs Bulletin. Students are responsible for maintaining high standards of academic honesty and personal integrity in all matters, including reporting the results of their studies and research, completing assignments, and taking quizzes, tests, and examinations. When confronted with a possible violation of academic integrity, it is important that faculty members deal fairly and consistently with students. Also see the *Signature Work and Artificial Intelligence Guidelines* section in these Policies.

For detailed information, https://dukekunshan.edu.cn/en/advising/academic-integrity

Signature Work and Artificial Intelligence Guidelines

Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Quillbot are a novel technology to which higher education is learning to adapt. Signature Work Projects are expected to consist largely in original research and writing and as such the use of AI tools should be minimized. Students and mentors must together work out which tools might be appropriate to a given project, as well as the scope of their permitted use.

In any situations in which such tools are used, students are obliged to cite fully any use of generative AI tools in the formulation of their work, including by preserving a record of the use of the tool as original source material.

Students are encouraged to save all rough drafts and notes for papers, in case any concerns arise.

Signature Work Registration Hold Policy

Students who do not meet the deadline for submitting their Signature Work Project Proposal (SWPP), including their completed Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Certificate and, if needed, their IRB or IACUC Submission (see *IRB Requirement Policy* and *IACUC Requirement Policy*), will be subject to a registration hold – i.e. they will not be able to register for classes for the Fall Semester of their Fourth Year. Registration holds will be lifted as soon as the SWPPMA is submitted, though this may require a few days to process.

Signature Work Product Late Submission Policy

Due to the compressed timeline for mentor and second reader reviews, it is essential that students submit their final Signature Work Product and Portfolio on time. Only Signature Work products submitted by the deadline will be eligible for Distinction. Papers submitted 7 calendar days late will result in an automatic 10 pt

deduction in the Capstone 496 grade, with another 10 pts lost per additional 5 days. **At 21 days late, the Capstone 496 grade is automatically set to an F**, necessitating the student to retake it the next term.

Signature Work Grade Disputes

Faculty mentors have the final say in the grades that a student receives for their signature work capstone courses. Although mentors will base grades on the SW rubrics, ultimately the specific letter grade given is at the mentor's discretion, and may involve additional factors like promptness, responsiveness, etc.

That said, some circumstances will result in the student receiving a lower grade than what their mentor has submitted (see *Late Work Submission Policy*), or receiving an Incomplete ("I") despite their mentor's submission of a letter grade. These latter include failure to gain IRB permission for projects that require it (see *IRB Requirement Policy*), failure to submit within a week of the deadline, failure to submit all components of the SW Portfolio, failure to make necessary edits specified by the Second Reader, and failure to participate in the Signature Work Conference and Exhibition.

A student who questions a final grade received in a course should follow the procedures outlined in the "Grade Review Procedure" section of the UG Bulletin. With the exception of "I" grades, changes in end-of-term grades may be made by the instructor only to correct an error in calculation or an error in transcription. Changes in grades may not be based on the late submission of required work, on the resubmission of work previously judged unsatisfactory, or on additional work. Grade review does not involve regrading assignments and does not focus on how individual components in a capstone were graded, as it is the responsibility solely of the instructor.

Participation in the Signature Work Conference and Exhibition

Participation in the Signature Work Conference and Exhibition (SWCE) in Session 4 is mandatory for all graduating seniors. Failure to do so will result in an incomplete (I) grade for CAPSTONE 496, which in turn will delay the student's graduation. Students who are unable to attend the SWCE due to a documented medical or family emergency will have an opportunity to make it up one week later. (Students planning to graduate in the Fall Semester should consult *Signature Work and Fall Graduation* later in this Policies section.)

Signature Work and IRB Requirement

Any student whose Signature Work project will involve non-medical research on human subjects or their data, e.g. in the social or behavioral sciences, must first obtain approval from the DKU Institutional Review Board (IRB). More details, as well as the application form, can be found here: https://www.dukekunshan.edu.cn/research/process/. Students are encouraged to speak with their mentors about whether their work requires IRB approval, and to contact the IRB directly with any further questions.

Students whose work requires IRB approval must indicate so in the appropriate place on their SW Project Proposal. Students whose work requires IRB Approval **may not begin research** until they have obtained it. If

the IRB requires changes to the research procedures, those must be made before research can begin. Students will submit their final IRB approval as part of their DKU portfolio in their final semester at DKU. Students will face penalties, including delayed graduation and possible academic sanction, if they do not go through the IRB process and their submitted Signature Work product is determined to have required it.

Signature Work and IACUC Requirement

Any student whose Signature Work project will involve research on vertebrate animal subjects must first obtain approval from the DKU Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Students whose work requires IACUC approval must indicate so in the appropriate place on their SW Project Proposal. Students whose work requires IACUC Approval **may not begin research** until they have obtained it. If the IACUC requires changes to the research procedures, those must be made before research can begin. Students will submit their final IACUC approval as part of their DKU portfolio in their final semester at DKU. Students will face penalties, including delayed graduation and possible academic sanction, if they do not go through the IACUC process and their submitted Signature Work product is determined to have required it.

Signature Work and Fall Graduation

Students planning to graduate in the Fall Semester have a different set of milestones and timelines than those graduating in the Spring. Instead of presenting at the Signature Work Conference and Exhibition (see the appropriate section in these Policies for more), they present at the Signature Work Fair in Session 2.

For more detailed information, see the SW Academic Calendar on the SW Website.

Graduation with Signature Work Distinction

Overview

Graduation with Signature Work Distinction accords recognition to up to 10% of students in each graduating class who achieve excellence in their signature work. Graduation with Signature Work Distinction is separate and distinct from Latin Honors (see UG Bulletin for more information on Latin Honors).

Nomination and Selection of Graduation with Signature Work Distinction Awardees

Students may be nominated for consideration by their signature work mentors or faculty second reviewers. Each nominated student's overall achievement in signature work is assessed by the signature work committee and major convenors, who are responsible for awarding signature work distinction. For those students who are awarded Graduation with Signature Work Distinction, it will appear on the academic transcript as Graduation with Distinction. **NOTE: Only students who submit their final SW project on time will be considered for Distinction.**

Mentoring and Signature Work Credits

Faculty members receive credits for mentoring signature work projects, with guidelines for a minimum and maximum number of mentees. For updated information see "DKU Guideline on Teaching Credits, Signature Work, and Master Projects" in the Faculty Policies and Procedures:

https://www.dukekunshan.edu.cn/faculty-affairs/policies-and-procedures/

Appendix B: Signature Work Terminology

- **Signature Work (SW):** One of the core elements in DKU's innovative undergraduate curriculum. It provides a structure for significant independent work for all undergraduate students in their junior and senior years, guided by DKU faculty mentors. Signature Work testifies to the intellectual aptitude, creativity, and hard work of the graduating DKU student.
- **Signature Work Project (SW project):** Signature Work projects vary considerably across fields and disciplines, which fall under one of two categories: scholarly or creative/design. Scholarly SW projects are broadly concerned with generating original academic research. Creative/Design SW projects are primarily centered around creating a substantial non-academic product – a work of art, a business model, a policy paper, etc. The entire SW experience and all elements encompassing it include: three thematic courses, 8 credits of capstone courses (two 4-credit or two 2-credit and one 4-credit), planning and discussion with the SW mentor, and creation of the final SW product. At the end of the SW process, students will document their work in an online SW portfolio and are required to present their SW project and SW product at the end-of-year SW Conference & Exhibition.
- **Signature Work Product (SW product):** The final SW paper. Scholarly SW products consist of a 25-30 page research paper. Creative/Design SW products consist of a substantial non-academic product, which will also be accompanied by an academic paper of 15-20 pages. Both SW product types are pieces of academic writing similar to a UG thesis that synthesizes and concludes the outcomes. Both paper types include a short-written SW narrative that explains your SW project and how your thematic courses are linked to the SW topic.
- **Signature Work Portfolio:** The SW Portfolio is an online Box folder shared between the mentor and mentee, in which students document, synthesize, and reflect on their journey through SW. Students are expected to produce their SW Portfolio following the formatting guidelines provided by the Office of Signature Work. Collectively, it is a digital archive of SW at DKU.
- **Signature Work Conference and Exhibition (SWCE):** This is the required public event at the end of the academic year. It allows students to present their final SW projects and products, and participation is required for graduation.
- **Signature Work Mentor (mentor):** The DKU faculty member or instructor supervising the student's SW. Beginning in the junior year, the mentor will supervise and guide the student through the entire SW process, starting from their initial SW Project Proposal through the entire SW project, resulting SW product, the completion of the 8 credits of capstone courses, and participation in the SWCE at the end of the senior year.
- **Team-Based Project:** A student-initiated group scholarly or creative/design SW project. Each team member is still expected to produce their individual and unique SW product.

SWPP: Abbreviation for SW Project Proposal.

Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does my Signature Work Project have to be related to my major?

A: Yes, the JED/MOE require that all college graduates submit a thesis related to their major. That said, DKU offers a fundamentally interdisciplinary curriculum, and students may be able to do work that falls outside their traditional disciplinary boundaries, provided they can find a way of justifying its connection with the major. Students who are concerned whether their SW project will be acceptable within their major should consult in advance with their major convener, division head, and/or the SW Office.

Q: When should I take my capstone courses?

A: Signature Work Capstones are there to ensure that students have the time to *do the work* that SW requires – and get credit for it. Different projects may require very different timelines, and Capstone scheduling is more flexible than ever to accommodate some of that variety, as well as the sometimes unavoidable demands of students' coursework. Regardless of your situation, you should consult with your mentor and academic advisor to determine what Capstone timeline works best for you.

The traditional approach to Capstones has been to take them as two 4-credit courses in subsequent sessions (1-2 or 2-3) in the senior year. Experience suggests that this is still the best option for most students. It gives you an uninterrupted stretch of 4 months to devote yourself to research (495) and writing (496). Students who have other course obligations during Session 2 may need to split the Capstones into Sessions 1 and 3, though caution is needed to avoid a rupture in the middle of the work.

Likewise, students should only choose to take Capstone 495 as two 2-credit courses if their project specifically needs it. Experimental designs that must run for longer than one session, for instance, might benefit from spreading 495 over sessions 1 and 2 of the senior year. Others that require extensive work over the summer might wish to start 495 in session 4 of junior year and continue it in session 1 of senior year. Some students may even want to take their first 2-session capstone in session 3 of their junior year as a dedicated time to research and write their proposal. Bear in mind that RCR Certification is required for capstone registration, so **students who want to enroll in spring of their junior year must have a mentor and finish their RCR *before* the add/drop deadline**. As always, make sure to discuss these plans with your mentor/advisor.

One final thing. Students who take 496 in Session 2 will not be required to turn in their SW products until the end of Session 3, at which point they will also be graded by their mentor. However, *students are strongly encouraged to finish as much of their writing as possible by the end of their Capstone coursework*. Otherwise, you will likely find yourself in a situation in Session 3 where you're expected to write an academically-sound 25-30 page paper while also taking 8-10 credits of advanced classes.