

**AP** Higher  
Education



# AP Capstone™

An innovative program for high school students designed to build the analytic and creative thinking skills necessary for college success.

# AP Capstone™ Overview

AP Capstone™ is a new program from the College Board that helps students develop the independent research, collaborative teamwork, and communication skills valued by colleges and universities.

The program is built on the foundation of two new AP® courses — **AP Seminar** and **AP Research** — and is designed to complement and enhance the in-depth, discipline-specific study experienced in other AP courses.

In AP Seminar, students investigate real-world issues from multiple perspectives, gathering and analyzing information from various sources in order to develop valid evidence-based arguments. In AP Research, students cultivate the skills and discipline necessary to conduct independent research and to produce and defend a scholarly academic thesis.

**The AP Capstone™ program offers students the opportunity to:**

- engage with rigorous college-level curricula focused on the skills necessary for successful college completion;
- synthesize information and apply skills in new situations and cross-curricular contexts;
- collect and analyze information with accuracy and precision;
- craft, communicate, and defend evidence-based arguments; and
- practice disciplined and scholarly research skills while exploring topics that appeal to their interests and curiosity.

## AP Capstone Students Will

**1**

Develop a critical, questioning approach to information

**2**

Investigate issues from multiple, interdisciplinary perspectives

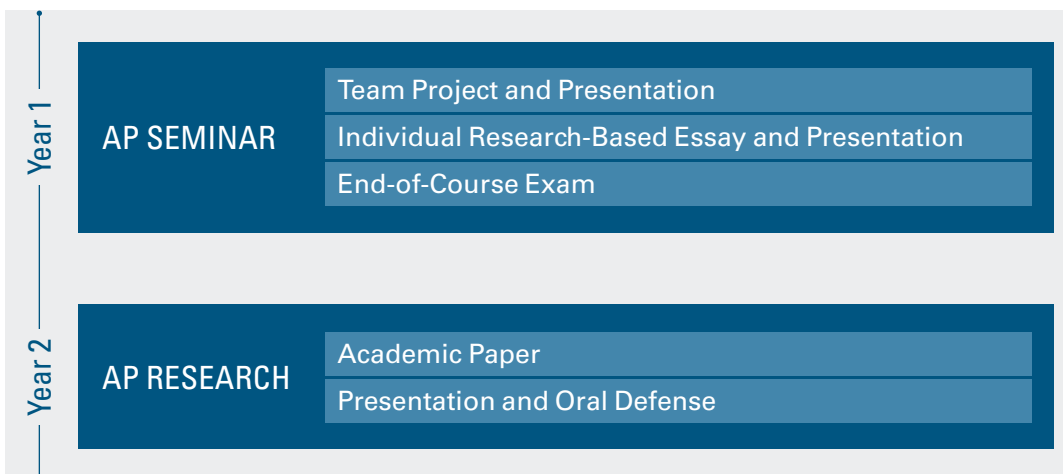
**3**

Craft, communicate, and defend evidence-based arguments



AP Capstone is built on the foundation of a new, two-course high school sequence — AP Seminar and AP Research.

## Structure of the AP Capstone Program



# Course and Assessment Overview

## AP Seminar



### Course Overview

AP Seminar engages students in a cross-curricular exploration of academic and real-world topics. The course aims to equip students with the skills to analyze and evaluate information with accuracy and precision in order to craft and communicate evidence-based arguments.

Using an inquiry framework, students are encouraged to consider multiple points of view in reading and analyzing articles; research studies; foundational, literary, and philosophical texts; speeches, broadcasts, and personal accounts; and artistic works and performances. Students will:

- Investigate topics from multiple perspectives
- Gather and analyze information from various sources; evaluate evidence
- Develop evidence-based arguments
- Collaborate in teams
- Communicate using appropriate media

#### Topics are selected locally and could include:

- Diversity
- Education
- Identity
- Immigration
- Liberty
- Myth
- Networks
- Revolution
- Sustainability
- Wealth and Poverty



### Assessment Overview

Students are assessed by two through-course performance assessment tasks and an end-of-course exam:

#### Team Project and Presentation

Students work in teams of three to six to identify, investigate, analyze, and evaluate an academic or real-world question or issue. Each team designs an approach; develops a written report and multimedia presentation to communicate its conclusion, solution, or recommendation; and offers an oral defense to questions posed by the teacher.

#### Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation

Students develop a research question based upon cross-curricular source material, which may include visual items and/or quantitative data, provided by the College Board. Students gather additional information; analyze and select evidence; and develop a well-reasoned written argument of approximately 2,000 words. They also develop a 6–8 minute presentation, situating their research and perspectives in a larger context, and deliver it to an audience.

#### End-of-Course Exam

The three-hour AP Seminar End-of-Course Exam consists of three short-answer questions and two essays based on source material. Students are required to:

- **Three short-answer questions:** Understand and analyze an argument in a single source or document.
- **Essay 1:** Perform a close reading of two documents; evaluate and compare the authors' arguments.
- **Essay 2:** Synthesize source material and create an evidence-based argument.

# AP Research

(AP Seminar is a prerequisite for AP Research)



## Course Overview

AP Research allows students to deeply explore an academic topic, problem, or issue of individual interest. Students design, plan, and conduct a yearlong mentored investigation addressing a research question of their choosing. The course allows them to further the skills they acquired in the AP Seminar course by employing research methods and ethical research practices, and by analyzing and synthesizing information as they address a research question. Students will:

- introduce and contextualize their research question;
- synthesize information and perspectives related to the research question;
- explain the research method;
- analyze and interpret the evidence;
- illustrate a cogent argument based on a clear, evidence-based line of reasoning;
- reflect on the research project and the implications and limitations of the conclusion(s) reached;
- document their inquiry process and communications with their teacher and consultant(s) using a process and reflection portfolio (PREP); and
- acknowledge and cite sources.



## Assessment Overview

Students are assessed on:

### Academic Paper

The course culminates in an academic paper of 4,000–5,000 words and a presentation with an oral defense. While the topics of the research studies will vary, the course requires all students to use the same skills to plan and conduct a study or investigation.

### Presentation and Oral Defense

Students deliver (using appropriate media) a 15–20 minute presentation and orally defend their research design, approach, and findings.

*“The ability to guide the student toward understanding where a research method is valid needs to be explicitly taught.”*

**Ellen Woods**

Stanford University, Associate Vice  
Provost for Undergraduate Education and  
Director of Thinking Matters

# Pedagogical Framework

Throughout the AP Capstone program, students consider and evaluate multiple points of view through inquiry and investigation to develop their own perspectives on complex issues. The program provides a process framework that allows them to develop, practice, and hone their analytic and creative thinking skills. This process is recursive, not linear — students may move back and forth between stages as they encounter new information.

AP Seminar and AP Research teachers participate in **mandatory professional development** before they are authorized to teach the courses. They attend a weeklong course on developing their pedagogy and participate in an online training that covers assessment scoring. In addition, teachers must submit their course syllabi for approval through the AP Course Audit process.

*“[Through this program] you get students turned on to higher education in a way they are not currently and they enter university with a different kind of attitude.”*

**Susan Roth**

Duke University, Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies, AP Capstone Advisory Committee

## QUESTION AND EXPLORE

Begins with an initial exploration of complex topics. Differing perspectives and questions emerge that spark a student’s curiosity, leading to investigation that challenges and expands the boundaries of their current knowledge.

## UNDERSTAND AND ANALYZE ARGUMENTS

Contextualizing arguments and evaluating the authors’ claims and lines of reasoning.

## EVALUATE MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Considering and evaluating multiple perspectives both individually and in comparison to one another.

## SYNTHESIZE IDEAS

Synthesizing others’ ideas with students’ own ideas leads to new understanding that forms the foundation for a well-reasoned argument.

## TEAM, TRANSFORM, AND TRANSMIT

Combining personal strengths and talents with those of others to reach a common goal. Thoughtful reflection leads to transformation and growth. Transmission requires students to adapt their message based upon audience and context.

# Expert Input

High school and college faculty from around the country contributed to the development of the AP Seminar and AP Research curriculum frameworks and assessments.

## AP Capstone Committee Members

**Maria Albano**, Barbara Goleman Senior High School, Miami Lakes, FL  
**Whitney Arnold**, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA  
**Rakesh Bhandari**, University of California, Berkeley, CA  
**Melvin Butler**, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
**Stephanie Carter**, McCracken County High School, Paducah, KY  
**Ivonne Chand O’Neal**, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC  
**Hui-Ching Chang**, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL  
**Rita C. F. Davis**, Hume Fogg Academic Magnet High School, Nashville, TN  
**Liz Dawes Duraisingh**, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA  
**Michael Dorff**, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT  
**Janet Eldred**, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY  
**Alice Hearst**, Smith College, Northampton, MA  
**Greg Henkelman**, Strathcona High School, Edmonton, CN  
**Dave Hodul**, Bishop O’Dowd High School, Oakland, CA  
**Matthew Krain**, College of Wooster, Wooster, OH  
**Carmen Martinet**, Barbara Goleman Senior High School, Miami Lakes, FL  
**Luis Martínez-Fernández**, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL  
**David Miller**, Deerfield Academy, Deerfield, MA  
**Jenny Olin Shanahan**, Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, MA  
**Brian O’Neal**, Montgomery College, Rockville, MD  
**Sara Orel**, Truman State University, Kirksville, MO  
**Lynnette Overby**, University of Delaware, Newark, DE  
**Teresa Reed**, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK  
**Susan Roth**, Duke University, Durham, NC  
**Kenneth Sacks**, Brown University, Providence, RI  
**Kelly Stromberg**, North Central High School, Spokane, WA  
**Gregory Taylor**, Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, NY  
**Nicole Wallack**, Columbia University, New York, NY  
**Ellen Woods**, Stanford University, Stanford, CA  
**Greg Young**, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT

## Building Skills Identified by Leading Educational Organizations

AP collaborated with college faculty and high school teachers to define content and standards for the two AP Capstone courses. The curriculum frameworks incorporate learning objectives identified by leading educational organizations, including:

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), *The Essential Learning Outcomes, College Learning for the New Global Century*

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), *Framework for 21st Century Learning*

Council of Writing Program Administrators, *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*

Association of College and Research Libraries, *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*





# AP Capstone Student Recognition



## AP Capstone Diploma™

Students who earn scores of 3 or higher in both AP Seminar and AP Research and on four additional AP Exams of their choosing will receive the AP Capstone Diploma™.



## AP Seminar and Research Certificate™

Students who earn scores of 3 or higher in both AP Seminar and AP Research will receive the AP Seminar and Research Certificate™.

### AP Capstone Diploma™

#### AP SEMINAR (Year 1)

- Team Project & Presentation
- Individual Research-Based Essay & Presentation
- End-of-Course Exam

#### AP RESEARCH (Year 2)

- Academic Paper
- Presentation & Oral Defense

4 AP COURSES & EXAMS  
(Taken at any point throughout high school)






### AP Seminar and Research Certificate™

# Scoring and Score Reporting

## Scoring

Students will be issued final AP scores for AP Seminar and AP Research. Each final AP score is a combination of all course assessment components.

Students receive an AP score from 1–5 for each course.

| AP SEMINAR ASSESSMENTS  | SCORING METHOD   | WEIGHT  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Team Project and Presentation</b><br>Individual Research and Reflection<br>Written Team Report<br>Team Multimedia Presentation and Defense | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All components are teacher-scored</li><li>The College Board validates the scoring for the Individual Research and Reflection and the Written Team Report</li></ul> |  25%   |
| <b>Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation</b><br>Individual Written Argument<br>Individual Multimedia Presentation<br>Oral Defense  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All components are teacher-scored</li><li>The College Board validates the scoring for the Individual Written Argument</li></ul>                                    |  35%  |
| <b>End-of-Course Exam</b><br>Three Essays   | Scored by the College Board  |  40% |
| AP RESEARCH ASSESSMENTS   | SCORING METHOD   | WEIGHT  |
| <b>Academic Paper</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Teacher-scored</li><li>College Board validates the scoring</li></ul>   |  75% |
| <b>Presentation and Oral Defense</b>  | Oral defense is scored by a panel of school-based evaluators   |  25% |

# Score Reporting to Colleges

Colleges receive a single cumulative score for AP Seminar and a single cumulative score for AP Research.

All scores will be reported on the 1–5 AP scale in the same format as other AP Exam score reports you currently receive.

| COMPONENT  | COLLEGES RECEIVE   |
|--|--|
| AP Seminar   | A score report that includes a cumulative score for the three scored components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Team Project and Presentation</li><li>• Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation</li><li>• End-of-Course Exam</li></ul> |
| AP Research  | A score report that includes a cumulative score for the two scored components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Academic Paper</li><li>• Presentation and Oral Defense</li></ul>  |
| Additional AP Exams  | Score reports that look exactly the same as the AP Exam score reports you currently receive.   |
| AP Capstone Diploma or AP Seminar and Research Certificate | An indicator on the score report that the student has earned the AP Capstone Diploma or the AP Seminar and Research Certificate.   |

For a list of high schools participating in the AP Capstone program, visit [www.collegeboard.org/capstone](http://www.collegeboard.org/capstone).

**New AP Capstone Exam codes:**

AP Seminar: 22

AP Research: 23

# College Admission and Recognition

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Encourage students to participate in rigorous course work like AP Capstone by supporting the program through an admission statement and by offering recognition to students.

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# Show your support for AP Capstone

Please join the list of Colleges and Universities that have recognized students who have participated in the program during the admission process by signing the AP Capstone statement of support. To see a list of the signatory institutions and to add your institution to the list, visit [www.collegeboard.org/apcapstoneHED](http://www.collegeboard.org/apcapstoneHED).

You can also submit your own statement of support that recognizes student achievement in the program and encourages Capstone students to apply to your institution.

*Students who have challenged themselves with rigorous work and engaged in interdisciplinary learning will be poised to make the most of their college experience.*

*The AP Capstone program provides an excellent opportunity for high school students to develop the research, collaboration, and communication skills that are essential to success in college and in today's complex and interconnected world.*

*The program is built on the foundation of two new AP courses — AP Seminar and AP Research — and is designed to complement and enhance the in-depth, discipline-specific study provided through other AP courses. AP Seminar provides sustained practice in investigating issues from multiple perspectives. In AP Research, students cultivate the skills and discipline necessary to conduct independent research, write a scholarly academic thesis, and present and defend their findings.*

## **AP Capstone Program Goals**

- *Engagement with rigorous college-level curricula*
- *Promotion of a critical, questioning approach to information*
- *Development of scholarly research skills*
- *Cultivation of the ability to synthesize knowledge and apply skills in cross-curricular contexts*
- *Empowerment of students to collect and analyze information with accuracy and precision*
- *Cultivation of student writing abilities so they can craft, communicate, and defend evidence-based arguments*

## **Additional Support for AP Capstone**

*"The AP Capstone program will help students to develop critical thinking skills that allow them to think independently, to analyze issues from different perspectives, to communicate clearly, and to conduct independent research. These are exactly the types of skills that they will be expected to utilize in college and the AP Capstone program will give them a terrific head start.*

**Zina L. Evans**

University of Florida, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Associate Provost

*AP Capstone provides more of the learning students will need for success in college and beyond ... We want them to come in ready to analyze issues from multiple perspectives, integrating disparate ideas, and comfortable with innovation, so they can make real contributions when they get here.*

**Ken O'Donnell**

California State University, Office of the Chancellor; Senior Director, Student Engagement

# Best Practices for Recognizing AP Capstone

Many colleges and universities are committed to recognizing students who achieve passing scores in AP Seminar and AP Research. As a result, these institutions are considering how the new AP Capstone program's curriculum framework and assessments — focused on critical analysis of information, independent research, collaboration, and communication — might map to their own courses, earning students credit and placement.

After reviewing the AP Seminar and AP Research curriculum frameworks, your institution may want to consider “course-match” models that allow for direct alignment between each AP Capstone course and a campus-based course, or “block” alignment, where the successful completion of the AP Capstone Diploma yields certain automatic course credit or placement. These decisions will be influenced by the degree programs available at your university.



## Course Matches

Consider matching AP Seminar and AP Research to courses at your institution.

### AP Seminar

- Interdisciplinary study courses or electives
- Writing-intensive first-year courses, especially those that are interdisciplinary
- Communications courses that develop public speaking and oral defense skills
- First-year seminar
- Critical thinking courses

### AP Research

- Research methodology courses
- Independent study and special topics courses



## Other Options for Recognition

Your institution may also choose to recruit and reward the academic effort of AP Capstone students by considering some of the following options:

### AP Capstone Diploma

- Similar credit and/or placement as that granted for successful completion of the International Baccalaureate Diploma

### Admission and scholarships

- Academic scholarships for completion of the AP Seminar and Research Certificate and/or AP Capstone Diploma
- Placement into honors colleges or programs
- Weighted consideration in the admission process
- Placement into undergraduate research programs

## Resources

Complete Course and Exam Descriptions, which include detailed information about learning outcomes and assessments for both courses, are available for review at [www.collegeboard.org/apcapstoneHED](http://www.collegeboard.org/apcapstoneHED).

This document can help you determine which of your campus courses might best align with the new AP Capstone program.

To learn more, email [aphighered@collegeboard.org](mailto:aphighered@collegeboard.org)





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