

AP[®] Research

About the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®])

The Advanced Placement Program[®] has enabled millions of students to take college-level courses and earn college credit, advanced placement, or both, while still in high school. AP Exams are given each year in May. Students who earn a qualifying score on an AP Exam are typically eligible, in college, to receive credit, placement into advanced courses, or both. Every aspect of AP course and exam development is the result of collaboration between AP teachers and college faculty. They work together to develop AP courses and exams, set scoring standards, and score the exams. College faculty review every AP teacher's course syllabus.

AP Capstone™ Program

AP Capstone™ is an innovative diploma program from the College Board that equips students with the independent research, collaborative teamwork, and communication skills that are increasingly valued by colleges. AP Capstone is built on the foundation of two 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 credible and valid evidence-based arguments. AP Seminar is a prerequisite for AP Research. Completing AP Seminar and all its required assessment components is necessary for students to develop the skills to be successful in AP Research. In AP Research, students cultivate the skills and discipline necessary to conduct independent research and inquiry in order to produce and defend their scholarly work.

Students who earn scores of 3 or higher in AP Seminar and AP Research and on four additional AP Exams of their choosing will receive the AP Capstone Diploma™. Students who earn scores of 3 or higher in AP Seminar and AP Research but not on four additional AP Exams will receive the AP Seminar and Research Certificate™.

AP Research Course Overview

AP Research, the second course in the AP Capstone experience, allows students to deeply explore an academic topic, problem, issue, or idea of individual interest. Students design, plan, and implement a yearlong investigation to address a research question. Through this inquiry, they further the skills they acquired in the AP Seminar course by learning research methodology, employing ethical research practices, and accessing, analyzing, and synthesizing information. Students reflect on their skill development, document their processes, and curate the artifacts of their scholarly work through a process and reflection portfolio. The course culminates in an academic paper of 4,000–5,000 words (accompanied by a performance, exhibit, or product where applicable) and a presentation with an oral defense.

RECOMMENDED PREREQUISITES

Students must have successfully completed the AP Seminar course.

AP Research Course Content

In the classroom and independently (while possibly consulting any expert advisers), students learn and employ research and inquiry methods to develop, manage, and conduct an in-depth investigation of an area of personal interest, culminating in an academic paper of 4,000–5,000 words that includes the following elements:

- Introduction and Literature Review
- Method, Process, or Approach
- Results, Product, or Findings
- Discussion, Analysis, and/or Evaluation
- Conclusion and Future Directions
- Bibliography

Using a process and reflection portfolio (PREP), students document their inquiry processes, communication with their teachers and any expert advisers as needed, and reflections on their thought processes. Students have regular work-in-progress interviews with their teachers to review their progress and to receive feedback on their scholarly work.

Lastly, students develop and deliver a presentation (using an appropriate medium) and an oral defense to a panel on their research processes, method, and findings.

Pedagogical Framework

Throughout the program, students consider and evaluate multiple points of view to develop their own perspectives on complex issues and topics through inquiry and investigation. The AP Capstone program provides students with a framework that allows them to develop, practice, and hone their critical and creative thinking skills as they make connections between various issues and their own lives.

Students use the following framework as they explore issues and topics:

- Question and Explore
- Understand and Analyze
- Evaluate Multiple Perspectives
- Synthesize Ideas
- Team, Transform, and Transmit

AP Research Assessment Structure

Students are assessed with one through-course performance task consisting of two distinct components. Both components will be included in the calculation of students' final AP scores.

Assessment Overview

- **Academic Paper – 75%**
- **Presentation and Oral Defense – 25%**

Format of Assessment

Academic Paper

In an academic paper of 4,000–5,000 words, scored by College Board, students will complete the following tasks related to a research question/project goal on a topic of their own choosing:

- Introduce the research question/project goal and review previous work in the field.
- Synthesize the varying perspectives in the scholarly literature to situate the research question/project goal within a gap in the current field of knowledge.
- Explain and provide justification for the chosen method, process, or approach and its alignment with the research question.
- Present the findings, evidence, results, or performance/exhibit/product generated by the research method.
- Interpret the significance of the results, performance/exhibit/product, or findings; and explore connections to the original research question/project goal.
- Articulate the new understanding generated through the research process and the limitations of the conclusion or creative work.
- Discuss the implications to the community of practice.
- Identify areas for future research.
- Provide a complete list of sources cited and consulted in the appropriate disciplinary style.

Presentation and Oral Defense

All students will develop a 15–20-minute presentation (using appropriate media) and deliver it to an oral defense panel of three evaluators. It is suggested that students' oral presentation be no longer than 15 minutes to ensure at least 5 minutes for the oral defense. Like the academic paper, the presentation provides an opportunity for students to showcase their research by communicating effectively and succinctly to an audience of educated, non-experts. Students whose academic paper is accompanied by an additional piece of scholarly work (e.g., performance, exhibit, product) must arrange for the teacher and panelists to view this work prior to the presentation and oral defense).

Following the presentation, an oral defense panel will ask three questions of the student. The panel must consist of the AP Research teacher and two additional adult panel members (preferably expert advisers or discipline-specific experts) chosen by the AP Research teacher. This evaluative component is designed to assess a student's articulation of the inquiry process, understanding of results and conclusions, and reflection on the research experience.