



Student Handbook

2023-2024



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The mighty Honours+ Checklist

Below, we provide you with an overall checklist for every task your student team needs to complete in order to successfully complete Honours+. To be specific, if you stick to the general guidelines of this checklist, nothing can go wrong and you should stay on track just fine.

Ready? Set? Go!

1) Honours+ Kick-Off (Deadline: **Wednesday November 1st**)

- ☐ Attend the Honours+ Kick-Off event, during which you will meet your team and Supervisor;

2) Team Kick-Off Meeting: Before and during the first team meeting, complete the team charter (Deadline: **Friday November 17th**)

- ☐ Schedule your first team meeting together with your Supervisor to set ground rules for teamwork;
- ☐ Complete the *individual section* of the [team charter](#) and bring it to the team meeting.
- ☐ Attend the team meeting; Check the [Kick-Off Meeting checklist](#) for this meeting to see if you discussed all important topics;
- ☐ Complete the *team section* of the team charter together.
- ☐ Send the completed team charter to your Supervisor.

And we're off!

3) Schedule regular team meetings throughout the programme.

- ☐ Schedule weekly sessions with your student team;
- ☐ Schedule sessions with your Supervisor and keep them updated on your progress on a regular basis.

4) Step 1: Question formulation & clarifying research focus (Deadline: **Friday January 19th, 23:59 hrs**)

- ☐ Complete your team's literature review on the topic of the challenge;
- ☐ Define your final research question;
- ☐ Send a draft to your Supervisor for feedback.
- ☐ Send an email to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl with your team's research question.

5) Attend 2 workshops of your choosing.

- ☐ Sign up on time for two [workshops](#) (limited spaces);
- ☐ Attend two workshops;

Halfway there

6) Honours+ Midterm Expert Discussion Evenings (**Wednesday March 6th or Thursday March 7th**)

- ☐ Prepare for the Midterm Expert Discussion Evening by preparing a pitch (if you would like to use slides, bring your own laptop) on the status quo of your Challenge and a problem your team is facing that you would like input on from an expert;
- ☐ Attend the Midterm Expert Discussion Evening your team is scheduled for;

7) Step 2: Select research methods & collect data (Deadline: **Friday March 22nd, 23:59 hrs**)

- ☐ Design the actual study, define the methodology;
- ☐ Collect the necessary data;
- ☐ Send a draft to your Supervisor for feedback.

8) Schedule the Midterm Feedback session (Wednesday March 27th)

- ☐ Schedule the Midterm Feedback session with your Supervisor;
- ☐ Prepare for the meeting by filling out the [Gibbs Reflection Practitioning](#) form and send it to your Supervisor prior to the session;
- ☐ Fill out both part 1 and part 2 of the [Peer Evaluation form](#), and send it to your Supervisor prior to the session;
- ☐ Attend the actual meeting as a team, with the Supervisor present, and make agreements for the second half of the team challenge and your team's functioning;

9) Step 3: Analysis & data interpretation (Deadline: Friday April 26th, 23:59 hrs)

- ☐ Organize the collected data;
- ☐ Analyze the results;
- ☐ Send a draft to your Supervisor for feedback.

Wrap it up!

10) Step 4: Conclusion (Deadline: Monday May 6th, 23:59 hrs)

- ☐ Generalize your results. Relate what you have learnt on a small scale to the bigger picture;
- ☐ Provide potential suggestions for further research;
- ☐ Highlight the potential solution you are offering (applied research challenges), or the new knowledge you added to the already existing knowledge on this topic (theoretical research challenges);
- ☐ Send a draft to your Supervisor for feedback.

11) Step 5: Share your work (Deadline: Monday May 13th, 23:59 hrs)

- ☐ Send the final report to your Supervisor and to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl;
- ☐ Send your PowerPoint slides for your pitch to your Supervisor and to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl;
- ☐ Send the digital file of the poster to your Supervisor and to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

12) Honours+ Closing Event

- ☐ Hand in the printed poster at EDLAB, TAPX, room 0.003 (Deadline: Tuesday May 14th, 16:00 hrs);
- ☐ Attend the Closing Event on Wednesday May 15th;

13) Team Closing Session (Deadline: Friday May 31st)

- ☐ Schedule a team closing session together with your Supervisor to evaluate and discuss the results of the team challenge.
- ☐ Fill out both part 1 and part 2 of the [Peer Evaluation form](#), and send it to your Supervisor prior to the session.

14) Reimbursement of costs (Deadline: Friday June 7th)

- ☐ Send in the filled out reimbursement form of your team's spending. Attach original receipts, sign the form and send it to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl, or drop it off at EDLAB.

Dear Honours+ Student,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to Honours+, Maastricht University's interdisciplinary excellence programme for all Bachelor Honours students.

Over the course of six months, participating in the Honours+ programme will offer you plenty of opportunities to challenge yourself, further develop useful academic and personal skills, and explore other academic fields and disciplines in order to broaden your knowledge and expand your academic mind-set.

Honours+ was specifically designed to bring Honours students from all faculties together and add value to your bachelor education by doing so. Faculties have cleared out ECTS in their honours programme to make room for Honours+.

We have been working hard to organize and coordinate a highly educational but also fun programme for you and hope you are as excited about participating as we are about creating an optimized learning environment for you to flourish in. Honours+ is centrally coordinated by EDLAB, Maastricht University's institute for teaching and learning.

In this student handbook, you will find everything you will need to make your Honours+ experience a grand success. We advise you to read it carefully and make sure you are familiar with the information at all times.

We wish you a fruitful and inspiring Honours+ endeavour and look forward to seeing you and all that Honours+ helped you accomplish at the Honours+ Closing Event in May.

Warm regards,

The Honours+ Central Management Team
Fabienne Crombach & Tania Topa



1: Guidelines for Being an Honours+ Student

First things first; in order to help you get the most out of your Honours+ experience, we wish to provide you with basic guidelines and an explanation of assets we believe will enable you to become an honours student truly worthy of the additional plus.

Participating in Honours+ asks more of you academically as well as in the “effective teamwork” department.

Honours+ will offer you a chance to supplement your education in a highly valuable manner. However, you will only reap the benefits of the programme if you put in a certain amount of effort, dedication, commitment, and time.

In our view, the ideal Honours+ student:

- is able to make a serious commitment and willing to go the extra mile;
- has impeccable time management skills or the drive to develop them;
- is a flexible, exceptionally reliable, and people-oriented team player;
- is eager to learn, grow, and work on personal/academic development;
- sees problems as an exciting challenge;
- is able to apply creativity and innovative solutions to said challenges;
- is able to translate complex academic content into intelligent but accessible representations;
- is able to academically connect with others across disciplines and work together towards a common objective.

The Honours+ programme offers you plenty of opportunities to work on developing or fine-tuning this set of assets. Wrapping up your bachelor’s education as a true Honours+ student will give you a competitive edge as an excellent student, with not just outstanding academic achievements but also a set of useful skills that are valuable in any form of graduate education or professional occupation following your bachelor's degree.

1.1. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR

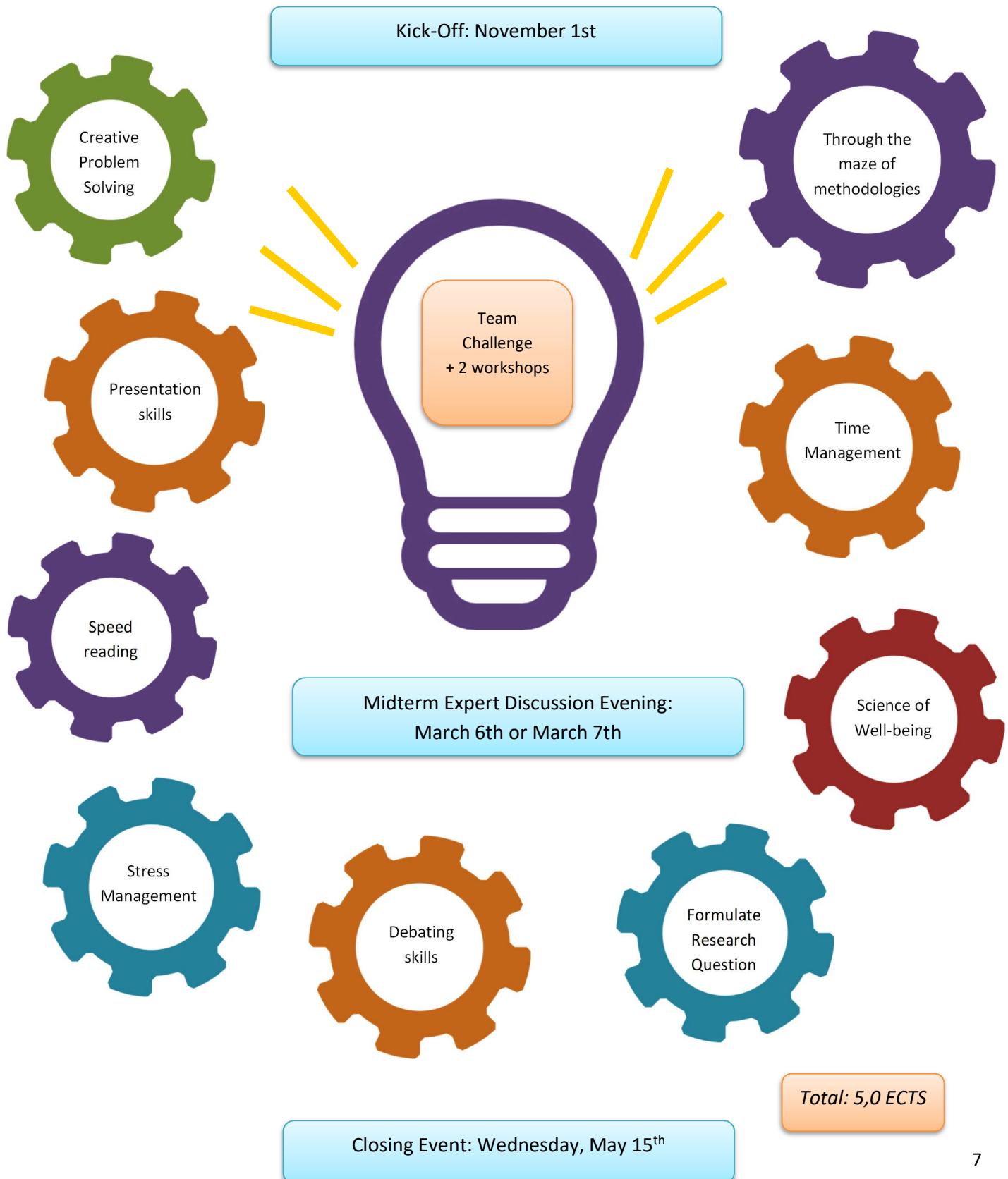
Throughout Honours+, you will be meeting and working with Supervisors, UM employees, fellow bachelor honours students, the Honours+ Central Management Team, and other (external) professionals. All Honours+ students are expected to behave in a polite and professional manner towards all parties involved with Honours+. You will soon find that maintaining a courteous and professional demeanour in both concord and conflict will go a long way and always enable you to achieve the desired results in the end.

Guidelines for professional behaviour:

- Communicate politely and respectfully with everyone at all times.
- Take your commitments seriously and be a reliable team player.
- Give and receive feedback in a strictly constructive manner.
- Always aim to resolve any sort of conflict in a fair and effective manner.
- Be honest and ethical.

2: Honours + Programme Structure

The Honours+ programme contains various simultaneous components. More specifically, you will attend a couple of events, workshops, and execute a team challenge together with your interdisciplinary student team.



2.1 LEARNING GOALS

Each programme component is specifically designed to accommodate a set of three major learning goals we wish to help you accomplish.

1. **Broadening your horizon:** deepening and broadening your academic knowledge across various disciplines will help you become a well-rounded, knowledgeable student and a real team player. By working together on the team challenge, you will develop a broad understanding of different disciplines and perspectives at a high academic level.
2. **Skills development:** we wish to send you off into the rest of your education programmes (at UM or elsewhere) or onto the job market after obtaining your bachelor's degree with a useful set of practically applicable academic skills. By attending the workshops and by working in an interdisciplinary team, we offer you a chance to work on these skills in an educational setting.
3. **Building a community:** we wish to bring all honours students together and connect on an academic and social level. An interdisciplinary exchange between faculties is extremely educational and in line with Maastricht University's aim to connect and thrive as one. Additionally, an increasingly strong honours community at UM could be beneficial to its members' future endeavours, whether they be academic or professional. Through coming together at workshops, networking at the central events, join the informal social gatherings, and creating something together in the team challenge, we aim to build bridges and unite as one honours community.

2.2 TIME INVESTMENT

Honours+ is **part of** your honours education. This means that each faculty has cleared 5 ECTS within their existing honours programme, to make room for Honours+. It is therefore an integral part of your honours education, and not workload that comes on top of your honours education.

Taking into account Honours+, your faculty honours education, your regular curriculum, as well as any other extracurricular or private activities that might fill up your weekly calendar, it is important to realize that participating in Honours+ will require your commitment and dedication.

Overall, Honours+ has been designed to require 140 hours (the equivalence of 5 ECTS) of your time, spread out over the course of approx. 6 months (November until Mid-May). It is important to note that poor time management will most likely not only affect you, but your team members and your Supervisor as well. Be sure to manage your time well and securely schedule your activities.

The breakdown:

- ±10 hours for attending mandatory Central Events;
- ±6 hours for attending (mandatory) workshops;
- Remaining hours (±124) for the team challenge.

Honours+ offers workshops on time management and stress management, to help you prioritise and manage your time and tasks wisely. However, if you ever feel that your commitments are too overwhelming, come and talk to Central Management. We can help you prioritise structure and refocus your H+ related tasks, which may give you peace of mind and renewed energy. We also offer a special H+ Care Package to help you deal with any issues you might be facing.

An exception this year, are the Honours+ students from FHML, who are joining Honours+ voluntarily. The FHML students will participate only in the team challenge and events (no workshops) and will be rewarded with 3 ECTS, to be traded in for an elective course at their faculty's honours programme.

2.3 MANDATORY CHARACTER OF THE PROGRAMME

You were selected by your faculty as a suitable candidate for the honours programme (at your faculty and Honours+).

However, participating in Honours+ is not without obligation. Whereas you are entirely free to plan team meetings when they best suit you, your teammates and (on set occasions) your Supervisor, there are several programme components that require mandatory attendance. Some of these programme components are more flexible than others are. For example, you are required to attend at least 2 workshops. The workshops are offered several times on different dates and time slots to ensure that every student is able to attend. Your attendance is also mandatory at the Honours+ Central Events. These events are organized on set dates. For specific information on mandatory programme elements, see the section on 'Assessment' below.

Exceptional circumstances

In case a student is unable to 1) attend the required number of workshops, or 2) attend a Central Event due to a serious personal situation or highly important prior engagement, they may make up for missing a workshop or event by submitting a substitute assignment. Students should email the Honours+ Central Management Team in case exceptional circumstances apply. Upon evaluation of their request, they may receive this substitute assignment.

In any case, students are advised to contact the Honours+ Central Management Team and their Faculty Honours Coordinator whenever private, personal circumstances (threaten to) get in the way of their participation in Honours+.

We understand life can throw a roadblock at you and we are always willing to look for a solution together if a student informs us in a timely manner.

2.4 ASSESSMENT

Assessment occurs based on 1) your Supervisor's evaluation of you and of your team (both procedural as in your performance as a team player (in part based on peer review) and the quality of the end product), 2) formal requirements.

In order to successfully complete Honours+, all students must fulfil a number of requirements.

The student or the student team:

1. Student: has attended at least 2 workshops.
2. Student: has attended all mandatory Central Events: the Kick-Off, Midterm Expert Discussion Evening, and Closing Event.
3. Student: has contributed sufficiently to the team challenge and has proven themselves a valuable team member.
4. Student team: submitted the final report and outcome of the team challenge before the deadline.

To fulfil the requirements 3 and 4, each student will receive a grade (scale 1-10, with > 6 = pass) from their respective Supervisor, comprised of:

60% → The team's performance with regards to the final report;

40% → The student's own personal and individual contribution.

The Supervisor will fill out an assessment form for each individual student, which includes feedback on the team challenge and the individual performance of the students. This assessment form includes five different criteria, which the Supervisor will give points for. The criteria that will be graded are:

1. Relevance – based on the choices you made;
2. Logic – based on the structure of your reasoning;
3. Added Value – based on the novelty and insights of your suggestions;
4. Applicability – based on the feasibility of your suggestions;
5. Communication – based on how you make yourself understood.

Upon successfully fulfilling the above mentioned assessment criteria, you will have successfully completed the Honours+ programme, and receive a 'pass' for the programme. A 'pass' for Honours+ is an integral part of the successful completion of your faculty honours programme. Please note that you will not receive a numerical grade for Honours+, due to the way the course appears on the transcripts of the faculties. You will be informed however of the numerical grade you were given by your Supervisor and their feedback on your team's and individual performance.

3: The Student Team and Supervisor

3.1 THE STUDENT TEAM

“Teamwork makes the dream work.”

Before the Honours+ Kick-Off opening event on November 1st, you will have learned already which team you have been assigned to and who your teammates are. At the Kick-Off Event, you will get an opportunity to get to know each other better.

You will be embarking on the Honours+ journey together, as a team of students from different disciplines and academic backgrounds. Not only does teamwork allow for brainstorming solutions much better than working by yourself ever will, working in a team also means that together you surely have enough time, resources, and mental capacity to get the job done right. We sincerely hope you are all able to experience working in your Honours+ team positively, and use this opportunity to learn from other faculties' honours students.

Even though teamwork generally is a very rewarding experience, it can also be challenging at times. Especially in a situation with limited time, added pressure of researching a topic out of your regular curriculum, and dealing with team members from different disciplines/academic backgrounds.

This is all part of the learning experience, which Honours+ first and foremost is. The good news is that there is a solution for everything and since it is a learning experience, Honours+ Central Management will try to support you in any way possible.

If you feel your team is not functioning optimally or you as a person cannot function optimally, make sure to speak up in a constructive way and do it as soon as possible! Always try to prevent any issues from escalating. Give each other feedback and respect each other's (cultural) differences.

When things (appear to) go south, do not be afraid or hesitate to contact the Honours+ Central Management Team.

3.1.1 HOW TO BE A TEAM PLAYER AND ROLE OF THE STUDENT TEAM

The student team is responsible for planning and execution of the challenge, under the guidance of the Supervisor. Most likely, team roles will be defined among you naturally, or perhaps the division of tasks is more of a guided process. Either way, it is good to be aware of the different team roles, and what the varying responsibilities mean. Throughout the execution of the team challenge, the team leader will work closely together with the Supervisor to steer the team in the desired direction.

How to be a team player?

- Have an open mind and go into the teamwork experience with positivity and readiness to succeed;
- Commit to your team and all agreements made within your team;
- Schedule and manage your time wisely, so that none of your teammates are ever left hanging;
- Communicate, and communicate clearly. In case of conflict, take a proactive and effective approach toward solving the conflict and setting your team up to succeed in the future;
- Be reliable. Always be on time for team meetings and meet your deadlines;
- Do not be afraid to be vulnerable. You are all students and you are here to learn. Be open about struggles you are dealing with that might affect your work and thus your team. You will be surprised to see how open people are to offer help.

3.1.2 VIRTUAL TEAMWORK

Teamwork remains a key tool since working in teams — especially those with different skillsets and backgrounds — sparks innovation, enables agility, and leads to better outcomes.

However, when it comes to working in a team that is not able to come together physically, there are some things to take a bit extra care of to ensure efficient and effective team functioning.

- **Communication tools:** When it comes to tips for managing remote teams, nothing beats efficient communication. Virtual team communication can best be handled with the right communication tools, and it is vital that you discuss early on in your group work which tools to use.
 - Chat tools – for asking quick questions and clarifying matters about your work.
 - Skype or Zoom – for carrying out video meetings/brainstorm sessions with your team.
 - Email – for the more official correspondence, like arranging the time for group reports and one-on-one meetings, or reporting to your Supervisor or communication with H+ Central Management.
- **Management tools:** There are plenty of free tools for managing your remote teamwork. Such a tool will greatly facilitate your project/challenge, task, and team management – as well as ensure you save time by working in one document at the same time. *Some free examples are Slack, Clockify and Trello.*
- **Virtual team culture:** Virtual team culture is just as important as a standard team culture – the group of people within a virtual team will still have to form some kind of understanding, as well as build mutual trust.
 - Try to establish (virtual) friendships – if you all live in the same country, you can organize get-togethers every couple of weeks. Organize a team dinner, grab a movie together, and get to know each other beyond your Honours+ experience.
 - Establish some ground rules for your virtual meetings. Basic things such as, turn your camera on so that genuine interaction with your team members is possible, take care to be appropriately dressed, do sufficient beforehand preparation of the meeting, be punctual, pay attention to others when speaking and make sure to look at your camera. If it is improper for a face-to-face meeting, then it does not work for video either. To avoid too many people talking over each other, it can be helpful to establish a host/chair for online meetings, and another team member to take notes.

3.1.3 CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES YOU MAY FACE

Participating in Honours+ will most often than not, be a pleasant experience. Working together with equally motivated and high performing students while picking up useful skills and knowledge will definitely expand your academic horizon and elevate your knowledge.

However, we cannot deny the fact that you will potentially also find yourself facing certain obstacles, when working with such diverse teams with different academic and cultural backgrounds, that we feel you need to be wary of.

- Honours students are in general extremely motivated and versatile, which leads them to dedicate their time to many diverse activities to build up their curriculum, next to maintaining a high GPA. This might also lead to **stress and too much pressure for some**. We provide a workshop on Stress Management within Honours+ that we specifically recommend to these students, and as part of the Care Package, students may schedule 3 wellbeing sessions with a professional coach.
- Trying to **schedule team meetings** with students from 5 different faculties is a challenge in itself. While it is an excellent planning exercise for students, and we try to facilitate you as much as we can by blocking a timeslot in schedules, the reality is that many teams will find the planning aspect one of the greater challenges in the programme. Try to be as creative as you can in scheduling your team meetings.
- Team members may have different disciplinary backgrounds, different motivations and aspirations, and different cultural backgrounds. Effective collaboration relies in large part on interdisciplinary communication. **Communication across disciplines is not always easy**. For example, implicit misunderstandings may arise concerning what is deemed a valuable question, what are valid data, what kind of result should emerge from the project and so on (Menken & Kestra, 2016). When performing under

pressure, these differences might be a cause for friction within the team. Try to avoid these frictions by careful communication.

- Over time, **team members' roles may change** from being core (fully dedicated to the research goal) to peripheral (committed to this research goal, but also working in one or more other teams), and vice-versa. This may cause extra stress on students that stay fully committed.

Of course, we all understand that in a team, everyone has different schedules and peaks in their workload. Since you are working in a team and every member needs to put in the required number of hours, it is vital that you communicate timely when you see an issue arising in your calendar with regards to availability and workload. Agreements can be made within the team to divide tasks accordingly and exchange and shift tasks in times of high pressure, if possible.

Also, the assessment of the Team Challenge by the Supervisor will take each student's individual contribution to the team and their work into account, to avoid freeriding as much as possible. With Honours+ it cannot be stressed enough that this programme is an integral part of the students' regular faculty honours programme. Failing Honours+ will lead to having to compensate for the missing credits at their faculty.

If at any point you need support or advice on how to deal with a certain issue, please inform the Honours+ Central Management Team at honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

We will gladly provide advice, help you out or intervene if necessary.

3.2 THE SUPERVISOR

The Supervisor plays a crucial part in the team dynamics and the overall Honours+ experience. The main concern of your Honours+ Supervisor is your team's learning experience during the programme.

Because of the supporting role of the Supervisor and the safe learning environment they provide within Honours+, we require the Supervisor to be physically present in Maastricht during November-May to regularly attend team meetings and be available for questions you might have. We also recommend Supervisors to be available during some evenings, to help facilitating (virtual) team meetings.

- a. Because of the interdisciplinary character of Honours+, the main role of the Supervisor is to monitor an equal input from, and interaction between, the various disciplines and **guarantee sufficient challenge and academic depth**.
- b. The Supervisor does not necessarily have knowledge to a detailed level on all disciplines, but needs to stimulate the students themselves to **create links between the various disciplines** in the team.
- c. The Supervisor is not a sole source of required knowledge, but a **broker of knowledge** throughout the execution of the challenge.
- d. Furthermore, throughout Honours+, the Supervisor will **support the team in planning, developing, and completing the challenge**. The Supervisor does not take over the role of the team leader. The students will appoint a team leader in their team. However, the Supervisor is asked to intervene when the team does not display enough initiative and they stimulate the students to act pro-actively.
- e. The Supervisor takes the role of **steering and guiding the group, provides for a safe learning environment, and is sensitive towards team dynamics**.
- f. The Supervisor also **initiates and chairs the team's kick-off meeting and midterm feedback session**.

- g. The Supervisor **is in close contact with the Honours+ Central Management Team**, in order to assure monitoring of the overall programme process and team development.
- h. The Supervisor is also responsible for **assessing the interdisciplinary team challenge** and as such, the team's performance (see also section on "Assessment"). The final report will be assessed on relevance, creativity, logic, added value or novelty of insight and suggestions, applicability and communication. Students will be assessed by the Supervisor on both their team performance, and their individual performance and input.

The Supervisors is a determining factor in your overall Honours+ experience, and H+ Central Management takes this very seriously. In order to be as transparent as possible, students ought to be aware of the fact that Honours+ requires not just an honours mentality from students, but from the Supervisors as well. They are required to invest a certain number of hours of supervising Honours+ students, partake in a training programme to support the students to their best ability and communicate regularly with Central Management on their team's progress.

If at any time during your Honours+ experience, you feel that there is an issue with your Supervisor, come and talk to H+ Central Management about this, which will always be confidential.

We can help clear up misunderstandings and put you back on track.

3.3 TEAM MEETINGS

In order to successfully work on the Honours+ team challenge, we advise students to regularly meet up as a team (at least once a week). It is also advisable to meet with your Supervisor at least once every 2 or 3 weeks (preferably in person or online), and keep your Supervisor otherwise updated on your progress. The initiative to schedule these meetings lies with the students primarily.

Try to be creative with these meetings as much as you can. Schedule a meeting over dinner, for example. It is not just beneficial for the execution of your challenge, but for team dynamics as well. When scheduling meetings with your Supervisor, try to be sensitive towards the times of the meetings. Many Supervisors have family obligations, so try to inform your Supervisor in a timely manner and avoid making appointments with them at very late hours or during the weekend.

We would like to facilitate you to meet up, as much as we can. All participating faculties were requested by the Executive Board and Management Team to block a timeslot especially for Honours+ in every participating student's schedule. **This time-slot is blocked every Wednesday, between 18:00-20:00 hrs.** We encourage students to make use of this timeslot for team meetings, as much as possible.

There are rooms and a Common Room to reserve at Tapijn X, should you wish to meet. In case you wish to use the facilities, please send an email to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl and we will check the availability.

3.3.1 TEAM KICK-OFF MEETING & TEAM CHARTER

TEAM KICK-OFF MEETING

The actual working on the Team Challenge starts with a **Team Kick-Off Meeting** with the entire Honours+ team (Supervisor and students). During this meeting you not only get to be more acquainted with your fellow students and Supervisor, but you will also need to discuss at least the following issues as a team, to make sure you are off to a good start:

- **Introduction:** Make sure each student introduces themselves and explains their academic background and what added value their discipline could potentially bring to the challenge.
- **Expectation management:** What do you expect from each other, what can the students expect from their Supervisor and the challenge? The team can also set rules for behaviour, how to proceed if someone last-minute cannot attend a scheduled meeting, how often the team wishes to meet to work on the challenge etc.
- **Team roles:** In addition to knowledge, experience and skills, individuals have different behavioural traits or characteristics they bring to the way they carry out their work and these can be aligned to particular roles in the team: some are very good at seeing a big picture, others very good at detailed work. Some are very oriented towards action - good at just getting things done; others are natural communicators and networkers. The need for these different roles will emerge at different times and it is worth considering the composition of your team to ensure you have a balance of strengths.
- **Communication:** Discuss and agree upon how you as a team will work together during the Honours+ programme. This can vary from practical issues (use of email, phone, dates of meetings, etc.) to the way you will interact with your Supervisor (how often do they expect an update and in which way) and how to provide each other with feedback (how to deal with conflicts, free-riding etc.)

A [checklist](#) was drawn up in order to facilitate this meeting, and to use to support the Supervisor and the team. You can find the checklist on the [website](#) or in the Appendix.

THE TEAM CHARTER

Before the first team meeting (with just the students), we would like you to think about your ideas with respect to the performance of your team, and fill in the **individual part** of the team charter. During the first team meeting, you will fill out the **rest of the team charter together with your team**.

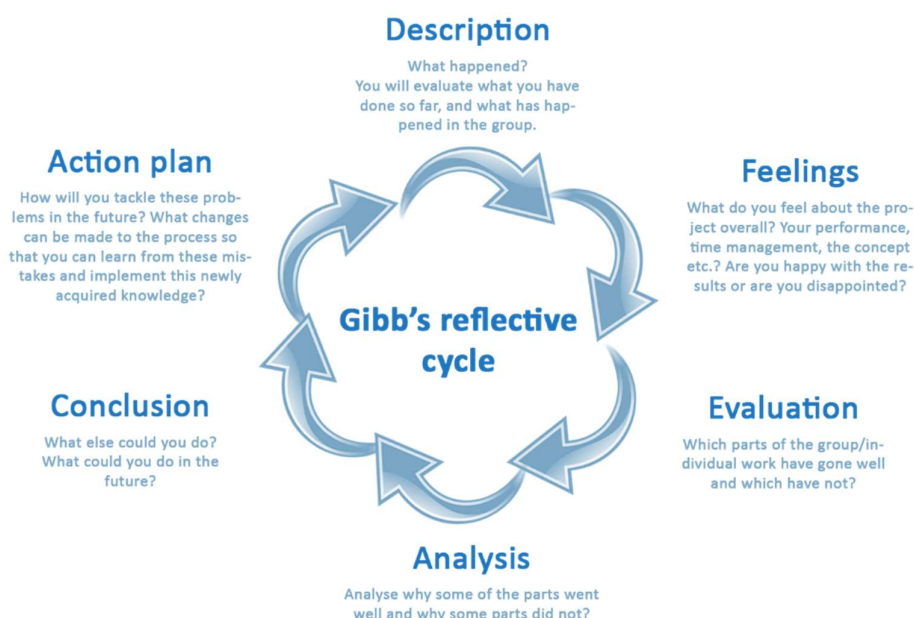
Research on team performance shows that high-quality team charters, a.k.a. written plans for how the team will manage its activities, are positively related to team performance. Drafting a team charter increases team members' knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses within the team, helps to create shared expectations, and facilitates the establishment of effective group practices for dealing with high and poor performance. You may find the team charter format on <https://edlab.nl/excellence/honoursplus/current-honoursplus-students/honoursplus-tips-documents/> (current student section, under "tips, tricks & documents") or as Appendix to this handbook.

3.3.2 MIDTERM FEEDBACK MEETING

To improve as a team, and have a better team dynamics, it is important to regularly evaluate and share information about the different situations and processes faced by the team. Within Honours+, we aim to facilitate this process by means of a **Midterm Feedback Meeting**.

During this meeting, all students and the Supervisor are present, and by means of providing feedback, the team will identify the gaps between the ideal standard of functioning as a team and the current situation, and then work towards bridging these gaps.

In Honours+, we use reflective practice as a method of assessing one's own thoughts and actions, for the purpose of personal learning and development. For many people, this is a natural and instinctive activity. Reflective Practice can be used for your own development and/or to help others develop.



The H+ Supervisor assesses the students' reflective determination to improve the team's process and learning experience during project execution.

In order to achieve and facilitate this, students are to work on their reflective practices individually, and will evaluate their own work on the project as well as the team process by filling out a self-assessment form (based on **Gibbs reflective cycle**, see above).

There are also moments scheduled in which students are requested to evaluate their own performance in the team, and anonymously the contribution of every team member, the so-called **peer evaluations**.

These peer evaluations may reveal participation issues, but also personal achievements of individual group members, that the Supervisor might not otherwise know about. Completing peer evaluations allows groups to assess how they can improve and develop during their time in their Honours+ team. It can also provide a starting point for constructive discussions and reflections on how the group is functioning in general, and how every individual is contributing to and benefitting from the team process. This system of peer evaluations encourages thus as well teamwork, positive interdependence, and individual accountability, whilst giving the Supervisor an insight into the individual performance and development of each individual team member.

HOW TO PROCEED?

The Supervisor guides the students through the process of reflection and facilitates their practices during the Midterm Feedback Meeting:

- The Supervisor schedules a Midterm Feedback Meeting with the students (taking place preferably until Wednesday March 27th). Please note that students ought to make sure as well that this meeting is planned. You may remind your Supervisor of it.
- Students will have prepared and sent their self-assessment forms to the Supervisor before the actual session. You can find the [Gibbs Reflection Practitioner form](#) on the website (current student section, under "tips, tricks & documents") or in the Appendix of this handbook.

- During the session, the Supervisor discusses with the students the self-assessment forms on reflective practices in order to improve the process and content of the second part of the Challenge;
- You will submit one [Peer Evaluation form](#) for each person, including yourself, with your name and the assessed person's name on each form to your Supervisor before the date of the Midterm Feedback Meeting.
- Your Supervisor anonymizes the answers to the last three open questions of the peer evaluation form, and sends them back to the corresponding team members, to reflect upon and discuss during the meeting.
- In total, the Midterm Feedback Meeting should take approximately 1-1,5 hour. You may request to reserve a room at EDLAB (email honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl to do so), use the EDLAB common room, or use an alternative location. Of course, this meeting can also take place online.

3.3.3 TEAM CLOSING SESSION

At the end of the programme, after the Closing Event has taken place, we request that students schedule one final meeting with their Supervisor to openly discuss their challenge outcome, group functioning and overall evaluation of the past months.

Again, during the Team Closing Session, we request that students fill out another [Peer Evaluation form](#) and send it to the Supervisor before the date of the meeting. Doing so will allow the Supervisor to be able to take the peer evaluation into consideration when finalizing their overall assessment of the team and its individual members.

4: The Interdisciplinary Team Challenge

4.1 THE TEAM CHALLENGE

Once entering the labour market, the majority of you will have to work in an interdisciplinary context, whether it will be in academia or otherwise. Even more important, expectations are that your generation will be faced with unprecedented complex (global) challenges, such as access to health care, social cohesion, safety and security, and climate change. Exactly these type of challenges require an interdisciplinary research approach and the involvement of multiple parties in order to be solved or at least dealt with. These complex issues are typified by conflicting values, mounting political pressure, and major economic interests.

In Honours+, we aim at offering you a first research experience to approach/tackle such (global) challenges in an interdisciplinary setting, under the professional guidance by staff members from Maastricht University, the so-called Supervisor.

The meaning of 'research' in this context is, to have students actively finding information new to themselves. Underlying this notion is the 'degree of knownness' of knowledge: whether research involves developing knowledge that is commonly known to humanity, commonly unknown or totally unknown. We see that even inquiry into the commonly known is all part of a process of research skill development. And to overlook the development of skills in earlier years of education is to miss the potential development of skills required of researchers or by industry and employment. (Willison, John; O'Regan, Kerry; and Kuhn, Sara K., "Researcher Skill Development Framework", 2018).

The H+ Challenges you will be working on in Honours+, are based upon and linked to the Dutch National Research Agenda, and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Furthermore, the setup of the Honours+ Challenge is aimed at building bridges between education and research, and at fostering closer links between researchers, students and disciplines.

We now call upon you as honours students, the brilliant minds of the future, to make a start to this plan of action for people, planet and prosperity.

A true Honours+ Team Challenge:

1. Is a challenging, academic and current case, issue or problem, with societal relevance;
2. Is linked to UN's SDG's and the Dutch National Research Agenda;
3. Pushes students outside their comfort zone;
4. Calls for an innovative solution, exploration or approach;
5. Allows and facilitates an interdisciplinary approach, with an equal input of the involved disciplines;
6. Requires a time investment of 125 hours per student;
7. Can be approached along the lines of the scientific method(s);
8. Either calls for a solution (applied research), or aims to advance knowledge on the phenomenon (theoretical research).

The fact that the H+ Challenges are interdisciplinary means that the disciplines are not the focus of attention here. The focus ought to be the problem, issue, or intellectual question that each discipline is addressing. The disciplines are merely a means to that end. In Honours+, we require that students explore a complex problem by drawing on their disciplinary insights, and integrate them.

4.2 APPLIED RESEARCH OR THEORETICAL RESEARCH

The definitive research question that your team will be working on depends on the team's interpretation of the Challenge and your plan for tackling it. Honours+ Challenges may imply doing either applied research or theoretical research.

With a ***theoretical research focus***, your aim for the Challenge is to contribute to the advancement in scientific knowledge for the complete understanding of a topic or certain phenomenon. It is completely theoretical, and focuses on basic principles and testing theories. These Challenges are aligned towards collecting information that has universal applicability. Therefore, it aims to adding new knowledge to the already existing knowledge.

With an ***applied research focus***, your Challenge is directed towards providing a solution to specific problems or an attempt to solve these problems. The research is not done for its own sake, but with the specific aim of solving the problem. It is research that can be applied to real-life situations. It studies a particular set of circumstances, so as to relate the results to its corresponding circumstances.

The category your Challenge most adequately belongs to, was made clear at the time of requesting your Challenge preferences in order to ensure all students were able to best choose the Challenge of their preference. It is also indicated on the Honours+ website, where the Challenges are listed.

4.3 RESEARCH PROCESS

Whether your Challenge has an applied research focus, or a theoretical research focus, there are certain fixed steps every type of research goes through, upon which the structure of Honours+ is based as well. The most common steps your research will go through are the following, and the deadlines in the H+ checklist are based on these steps as well.

1. Question formulation & Clarifying research focus.

Many students often underestimate the importance of this first stage in the research process. However, it is of high importance to have a clear eye on what the goal of your research is. The choice between the formulation of research questions and the development of hypotheses depends on your research approach. In order to avoid problems at this stage, get your research questions or hypotheses confirmed by your Supervisor before moving forward with the work.

Do not underestimate the time you will dedicate to literature review, because more often than not, it will be the longest stage in your research process. It is advisable to do literature review even before the formulation of research aims and objective (you will want to check if exactly the same research problem has been addressed before and in what way, is your topic relevant and complex enough or do you need to look in a different direction). Narrowing down and formulating a more specific research problem is quite often not possible without reviewing relevant sources. However, the majority of your literature review will be done after you have formulated your research question, or at least after you identified the direction and some keywords necessary for further inquiry. Don't be too worried either when your literature review causes you to revise or reframe your research question, it is a fluid process.

2. Select your research methods & Collect data.

Once you know the aim of your research and your final research question, you have come to the stage where collection method(s) need to be selected, based on the advantages and disadvantages associated with several alternative data collection methods. What method works best, given your Challenge topic and research question? Are you focusing on qualitative or quantitative data, or a mix? You will need to come up with a plan on how to collect data with maximum efficiency, and effectiveness, and draft up a plan on how to best organize the information and make sense of the collected data.

Topics that you may need to tackle during this step:

- What is the required information to answer your research question and what potential data sources for each piece of information do you need.
- Specify how you will sample these data sources (process of selecting units, e.g. people, from a population of interest so that by studying the sample you may fairly generalize your results back to the population from which they were chosen.)
- Select data collection methods.
- Design data collection instruments/forms/questionnaires and procedures corresponding to each data collection method.
- Specify data collection, coding, and analysis procedures.
- Plan how you will address validity and reliability issues together with your Supervisor.

Once you have a detailed methodology, it is time for the most demanding part of research. Collecting and analyzing information will require extensive brain capacity of the team.

Usually, each type of scientific research has to go through the ethical review committees within the university. However, the research done within Honours+, was cleared from this.

We would like to recommend however to always carefully reflect on whether/how anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed for the study participants.

3. Analysis & Interpretation of data.

Analysis of data plays an important role in the achievement of research aim and objectives. It means that you are going to convert quantitative and qualitative data into information that has meaning and value in light of your research question and goals.

In qualitative research using interviews, focus groups, experiments etc., data analysis is going to involve identifying common patterns within the responses and critically analyzing them in order to achieve research aims and objectives. Data analysis for quantitative studies, on the other hand, involves critical analysis and interpretation of figures and numbers, and attempts to find rationale behind the emergence of main findings. Comparisons of primary research findings to the findings of the literature review are critically important for both types of studies.

4. Reaching conclusions.

Now that you have gathered and analyzed your data, and have tried to find patterns within the responses, or have looked for a rationale behind the emergence of main findings, it is time to draw your conclusions. You will have to justify why you believe that your research aims have been achieved or what limitations were involved and potential suggestions for future research. Do not overlook the fact that you are doing interdisciplinary research in Honours+. You should indicate where insights from different disciplines are brought together and list the benefits of the combination of these insights. After all, it is the synergy of using perspectives from multiple disciplines to tackle the H+ Challenge, which we are looking for here.

5. Share your work.

The most common end product of research is a report, that allows for you to share your knowledge. Next to these two, Honours+ also requires you to visualize your findings into a poster, to exhibit and present during the Closing Event. Make sure you hand in drafts of every above-mentioned step to your Supervisor on time, to avoid not having enough time to implement their feedback at the very end of the programme.

4.4 DEFINING A GOOD RESEARCH QUESTION

As indicated in the previous paragraph, doing literature review and defining a good research question might be one of the biggest challenges ahead. It is the most basic step in your research and often takes considerable time and effort because you do not know much about the problem yet, or even know if it is researchable in an interdisciplinary way. For this reason, you should expect to revisit your research question as your research progresses. Take heart from the fact that even the most seasoned scholars struggle with this, and that you are here to learn.

A research question is the question around which you center your research. It should be:

- Clear: it provides enough specifics that one's audience can easily understand its purpose without needing additional explanation.
- Focused: it is narrow enough that it can be answered thoroughly in the space the writing task allows.
- Concise: it is expressed in the fewest possible words.
- Complex: it is not answerable with a simple "yes" or "no," but rather requires synthesis and analysis of ideas and sources prior to composition of an answer.
- Arguable: its potential answers are open to debate rather than accepted facts.
- Researchable in an interdisciplinary sense: this means that authors from multiple disciplines have written on the topic or at least on some aspect of it. (*How to Write a Research Question, the Writing Center, 2018*)

4.4.1. STEPS TO DEVELOPING A RESEARCH QUESTION

- 1) Choose an interesting general topic, related to your H+ Challenge. Ideally, choose a broad topic about which you genuinely would like to know more as a team, and that validates input from the disciplines present in your team;
- 2) Do some preliminary research on your general topic. Do a few quick searches in current periodicals and journals on your topic to see what has already been done and to help you narrow your focus. What issues are scholars and researchers discussing, when it comes to your topic? What questions occur to you as you read these articles?
- 3) Consider your audience. You will be writing an academic paper, so your audience will be academic, but always keep your audience in mind when narrowing your topic and developing your question. Would that particular audience be interested in the question you are developing?
- 4) Start asking questions. Taking into consideration all of the above, start asking yourself open-ended "how" and "why" questions about your general topic.
- 5) Evaluate your question. After you have put a question or even a couple of questions down on paper, evaluate these questions to determine whether they would be effective research questions or whether they need more revising and refining.
- 6) Is your research question clear? With so much research available on any given topic, research questions must be as clear as possible in order to be effective in helping you to direct your research.
- 7) Is your research question focused? Research questions must be specific enough to be well covered in the space available.
- 8) Is your research question complex? Research questions should not be answerable with a simple "yes" or "no" or by easily found facts. They should, instead, require both research and analysis on the part of the writer. They often begin with "How" or "Why."
- 9) Does your research justify using an interdisciplinary approach? Determine that important insights concerning the problem are offered by two or more disciplines. Determine as well that no single discipline has been able to explain the problem comprehensively or resolve it satisfactorily so that you may indicate the relevance of an interdisciplinary approach. (*Repko & Szostak, 2020*)
- 10) Draw on the disciplinary perspectives present in your team: Ask of each discipline "Does it illuminate some aspect of the problem, topic, or question and in what sense?" This will then help you further in your literature research and the paths your research could take.

- 11) Begin your research. After you have come up with a question, think about the possible paths your research could take. What sources should you consult as you seek answers to your question? What research process will ensure that you find a variety of perspectives and responses to your question?

4.4.2. EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Unclear: *How should social networking sites address the harm they cause?*

Clear: *What action should social networking sites like Facebook take to protect users' personal information and privacy?*

The unclear version of this question does not specify which social networking sites or suggest what kind of harm the sites might be causing. It also assumes that this "harm" is proven and/or accepted. The clearer version specifies sites (Facebook), the type of potential harm (privacy issues), and who may be experiencing that harm (users). A strong research question should never leave room for ambiguity or interpretation. (*How to Write a Research Question, the Writing Center, 2018*)

Unfocused: *What is the effect on the environment from global warming?*

Focused: *What is the most significant effect of glacial melting on the lives of penguins in Antarctica?*

The unfocused research question is so broad that it could not be adequately answered in a book-length piece, let alone a 6000-8000 word report. The focused version narrows down to a specific effect of global warming (glacial melting), a specific place (Antarctica), and a specific animal that is affected (penguins). It also requires the writers to take a stance on which effect has the greatest impact on the affected animal. When in doubt, make a research question as narrow and focused as possible. (*How to Write a Research Question, the Writing Center, 2018*)

Too simple: *How are doctors addressing diabetes in the U.S.?*

Appropriately Complex: *What main environmental, behavioral, and genetic factors predict whether Americans will develop diabetes, and how can these commonalities be used to aid the medical community in prevention of the disease?*

The simple version of this question can be looked up online and answered in a few factual sentences; it leaves no room for analysis. The more complex version is written in two parts; it is thought provoking and requires both significant investigation and evaluation from the writer. As a general rule of thumb, if a quick Google search can answer a research question, it is likely not very effective. (*How to Write a Research Question, the Writing Center, 2018*)

4.5 TEAM BUDGET & SPENDING

Working on your Challenge might require you and your team to spend some money throughout the programme. For example, you might have costs for printing the poster. Additionally, your team might benefit from a teambuilding activity, or perhaps you need to purchase specific materials, or pay for a service.

All Honours+ teams can be reimbursed up to a maximum of **€ 125** project-related costs. At the end of Honours+, your team needs to hand in a [reimbursement form](#), together with the **original receipts (no pin/maestro tickets)**.

IMPORTANT:

- Every spending needs to be agreed upon with your Supervisor in advance;
- In case you want to spend budget on gift vouchers to hand out to survey participants, you will need to mention the name/address/date of birth of every person you gave such voucher (tax regulations);
- The reimbursement form needs to be signed with an actual signature. Not just typing of a name.
- Honours+ Central Management at all times reserves the right to reject your reimbursement if we determine your spending to be unjustified or overly extravagant. The majority of your team budget spent on cocktails

for example, is considered too extravagant for an educational programme.

Please be mindful and honorable about your spending. If you are unsure, whether something is appropriate to apply for reimbursement, contact honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

4.6 TEAM CHALLENGE OUTCOME

By working on the Challenge during the Honours+ programme, following the scientific method, you will get a grasp on the interdisciplinary collaboration, together with all the opportunities and challenges it provides. This learning process is vital, and the results of it are to be put in an academic report.

Furthermore, Honours+ requests each student team to translate their findings into an A0 poster, and a presentation during the Closing Event.

These formats aim at teaching you how to present results to non-expert audiences and peers. This process of transfer of knowledge begotten during the Honours+ programme, and using it to make an impact and impression, is something we wish our Honours+ students to gain further experience in.

Additionally, since **multiple teams will be working on the same Challenge topic (but on their own specific research question)**, it means that teams will be able to compare each other's progress throughout Honours+, are able to exchange knowledge and experience on the topics during the events. Additionally, they will be competing for the most value adding findings during the Closing Event, thus creating a system of peer support.

Honours+ defines general guidelines for the outcome of the team Challenge. The further refinement of the style of the academic report needs to be defined in close interaction between Supervisor and students. Honours+ requires the following outcome (1-3):

OUTCOME:

1) Academic report, that:

- displays an interdisciplinary understanding of the researched subject, reflecting all involved disciplines and clearly shows what the added-value was of every discipline involved in tackling the challenge;
- includes a proposed potential solution to the problem (applied research challenges); or
- includes new and value-adding knowledge to the already existing knowledge on this topic (theoretical research challenges);
- contains between 6000-8000 words;
- is written in accordance with the APA guideline;
- is sent to the Supervisor and honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl, before the deadline **(Monday May 13th 23:59hrs)**.

2) Poster:

Based on the outcome of the scientific exploration of the team Challenge, each team visualizes their outcome in an A0 academic poster, to be exhibited and presented during the Closing Event.

Criteria for the poster:

- a) The standard format of a poster follows that of an oral scientific presentation and includes Introduction, Methods, Results, Conclusions; Recommendations/New knowledge, Names authors. A poster, like an oral presentation, cannot (and should not) contain all information you have on the topic. Scientific posters should stimulate interest rather than provide a detailed presentation. More detailed information ought to be provided in your presentation of the poster.
- b) One member of the student team emails the digital file of the poster to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl and the Supervisor, before the deadline **(Monday May 13th, 23:59 hrs)**
- c) One member of the student team hands in the printed poster at EDLAB, Tapijn Building X, room 0.003, before the deadline **(Tuesday May 14th, 16:00 hrs)**
- d) A0 format (118,9 cm x 84,1 cm).

- e) Consistent and aesthetically pleasing layout;
- f) Effective use of images, colours, and fonts;
- g) Limited use of large text-boxes;
- h) Source citations in proper APA-style.
- i) Honours+ will reimburse printing costs for the poster. In order to do so, **keep the original receipts**, and download and fill out the reimbursement form on the H+ website (current students, documents section). Then hand in the signed form and the original receipt (no scans) at EDLAB.

General guidelines and tips for your poster:

- Artistry does not substitute for content, although display of creativity is highly appreciated. The relevance of the poster and your research project should always be apparent to viewers.
- Place the title at the top.
- Use short sentences, simple words, and bullets to illustrate your points.
- Text should be broken up by including graphics or photos.
- Self-explanatory graphics should dominate the poster. The success of a poster directly relates to the clarity of your illustrations and tables!
- Avoid using jargon, acronyms, or unusual abbreviations.
- Use a non-serif font (e.g., Arial) for the poster.
- The poster (text and graphics) should be easily readable from a distance of about 2 metres. As a thumb rule, the text should be readable if the poster is printed out on an A4 sheet (e.g. Arial >24 points).

3) Presentation:

Based on the outcome of the scientific exploration of the team Challenge, each team presents their outcome during a **5-minute** presentation during the Closing Event, in front of a jury and other Honours students.

Your poster, will be the basis of your presentation, and will be the basis of your PowerPoint slides (slides zooming in on parts of your poster).

Picture yourself with your poster. Someone says, “So, tell me about your research.” What do you say? What would you tell them about your research in 5 minutes? Your research question, its relevance, the data you sought, the results you found, the conclusions you drew. What information can you convey that is complementary to the poster that is on display?

Challenges with a focus on applied research will focus on presenting their recommendations or proposed solutions to the proposed problem. Challenges with a focus on theoretical research will focus on presenting the added value of the new insights they gathered on the topic, contributing to the already existing knowledge.

The best presentation within every Challenge topic will win a prize.

Submitting the slides:

- Your presentation should not cover more than 7 slides in **PowerPoint**.
- Each slide zooms in on a separate part of your poster.
- One slide may be dedicated towards an introduction of your team members.
- One member of the student team emails their **PowerPoint** file to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl, and the Supervisor before the deadline **(Monday May 13th, 23:59 hrs)**
- When submitted, your presentation has a duration of **max. 5 minutes**.

5: The H+ Workshops & Care Package

In order to help you develop practical, applicable academic skills that will be useful to you now as well as in your academic and professional future, Honours+ offers you a number of workshops. All workshops will be conducted in English, and take approximately 2.5-3 hours.

All Honours+ students are **required to attend at least 2 workshops** out of the many different workshop topics that we offer (see “Assessment” section for specific requirements). Attendance is registered using signup sheets at the workshops. Please make sure to always sign the attendance sheet, because your attendance cannot and will not be verified otherwise. Attending more workshops than the required amount is allowed.

Choose 2:

- 1) How to Formulate a Good Research Question;
- 2) Creative Problem Solving;
- 3) Finding your way through the methods maze
- 4) Stress Management;
- 5) Time Management;
- 6) Science of Wellbeing;
- 7) Debating Skills;
- 8) Presentation Skills;
- 9) Speed Reading.

5.1 HOW TO SIGN UP FOR WORKSHOPS

To sign up for workshops, go to www.edlab.nl (Honours+) and navigate to the ‘Current Students’ page. There you will find, amongst other useful information for your Honours+ journey, the link to the [workshop registration page](#). This page includes the workshops’ description, preparation material if applicable, and a link to the signup sheet.

Please note that once you are signed up it is not possible to cancel your registration yourself. If you must cancel your registration please email honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl with your request. Registration or cancellation of a registration is allowed **up to 24 hours in advance** of the workshop date and time. Not showing up for a workshop without cancelling in advance, is considered unprofessional and may lead to you not being allowed to register for future workshops.

5.2 HONOURS+ CARE PACKAGE

Honours students are naturally driven and high-performing students, always looking for a new challenge. However much we appreciate this attitude and ability, it might also sometimes be the cause of certain issues. Especially when deadlines start adding up, pressure is building and a lot of new information comes your way, students might feel overwhelmed at times.

Therefore, Honours+ decided to provide our Honours+ students with the **H+ Student Care Package** this year. Please note that this is optional, on a voluntary basis, and merely meant for those of you that feel they would benefit from a bit of extra support.

FREE SESSIONS WITH A WELL-BEING COACH

We have arranged for H+ students to have max. 3 sessions of 45 minutes each, with a professional well-being coach. You are free to schedule a session anywhere between December and the end of Honours+.

This coach is Adina Petre from MyInsights. Adina is a professional psychologist and coach, and she would like to offer you all the following:

"I work both online and in the comfort of my practice, where I provide well informed, confidential, non-judgmental support to people who want to become more aware of who they are and gain more insight into both their personal and professional difficulties. If you are in need of a good listener and a cozy space to explore your own thoughts and feelings, or just needs some hands-on tips and tricks on how to better deal with life at UNI, don't hesitate to get in touch with me!"

Given the fact that Adina runs a professional practice, and therefore needs to carefully mind her schedule and opening hours, we will send you an email in December to invite you to contact her for a session, should you wish to.

WORKSHOPS WITHIN THE H+ PACKAGE

One of the criteria to successfully complete the H+ programme, is that you need to have attended at least 2 workshops. To not overburden you, we have selected several topics that count towards this attendance, that focus on wellbeing and stress management. You can easily sign up for these workshops via the [workshop registration page](#).

- *Science of Wellbeing, by Barbara Kuiters;*
- *Stress Management, by Key2advance;*
- *Time Management, by TijdWinst;*

H+ WALKING BUDDIES GROUP

Walking in nature clears your head, the fresh air lifts your spirit and it is a great way to meet new people. Besides that, we hope that it will add to your knowledge of this beautiful area in the south of the Netherlands. This area is renowned for its diverse landscape, rich history, flora, and fauna, all of it to be explored during the many walking trails that are set out already.

To this end, we will launch a group for all Honours+ students interested in going on walks or hikes with fellow students. It is up to you to decide how often you would like to go for a walk, how long, when, where and with whom etc. In case you are interested to be part of this Walking Buddies Group, please send an email to honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

6: Central & Informal Community Events

Over the course of the programme, Honours+ organizes several activities for all Honours+ students, Supervisors and coordinators. These events contain educational and/or assessment elements and offer opportunities for students and UM honours staff to meet, connect and create an honours community.

Remember! Your attendance at the Central events (Kick-Off, Midterm Expert Discussions, and Closing) is mandatory and a necessary requirement to fulfil if you want to successfully complete the Honours+ programme. Mark your calendars! If you cannot attend a central event, please refer to the section on 'Exceptional Circumstances'. The informal community events are free to join if you wish to spend more time with fellow Honours students.

Please refer to the Honours+ website, your student email account, and Facebook/Instagram for official invitations and definitive dates, places, and times.

Pictures might be taken during the Honours+ events, to use for promotional purposes. In case you object to your picture being used, please send us an email via honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

6.1 CENTRAL EVENT: KICK-OFF OF THE PROGRAMME

We want to officially welcome you to Honours+ and kick-off the programme together with a bang! Students will get an opportunity to first meet and get to know each other.

We hope to inspire you to go into the Honours+ experience with an enthusiastic approach and a good foundation for pleasant and effective teamwork.

Please refer to your email accounts to stay informed about the Honours+ Kick-Off event. Your attendance is mandatory.

Mark your calendars!

The Honours+ Kick-off event will take place on **Wednesday November 1st, at Brasserie Tapijn**.

When?	What?	Where?
18:00-18:15	Walk-in	Brasserie Tapijn
18:15-18:30	Welcome by H+ Central Management	
18:30-19:00	Dinner and possibility for icebreaker activity	
19:00-19:50	Interactive lecture on Interdisciplinary Teamwork, by Roosmarijn van Woerden (University of Utrecht)	
19:50-20:00	Break	
20:00-22:00	Pubquiz	

6.2 CENTRAL EVENT: MIDTERM EXPERT DISCUSSION EVENING

Halfway during the Honours+ programme, all students are required to attend one of the Midterm Expert Discussion Evenings (a schedule will be drawn up for when, which team needs to be present).

During these sessions, students will present their results thus far to an expert on the Challenge topic, after which they will be able to ask input from the expert on a content related issue they are dealing with.

Please refer to the Honours+ website and your student email accounts to stay informed about the Midterm Expert Discussion Evenings. **Your attendance is mandatory.**

Mark your calendars!

The Honours+ Midterm Expert Discussion Evenings will take place on **Wednesday March 6th or Thursday March 7th at Tapijn Building X.**

When?	What?
17:30-18:30	Dinner & plenary welcome/instruction
18:30-19:15	Expert talks per Challenge topic
19:15-20:30	Q&A with experts per Challenge topic. Each team prepares a presentation of the status quo and the problem they would like the expert to give input on.
20:30-20:45	Break
20:45-21:30	Teams that require additional time with the expert can continue their consultation. Teams that wish to discuss findings with their team members can have a team meeting, or informally meet with other Honours+ students.
21:30-22:00	Informal drinks & get together

6.3 CENTRAL EVENT: CLOSING EVENT

The Honours+ programme is concluded with a festive Closing Event, focused on bringing the Honours+ experience to a close together. During the Closing Event, each student team will present their findings concerning the team Challenge to the other Honours+ students, and a jury. The best presentation within every Challenge topic will win a team prize. We challenge you to impress your peers and UM's academic staff!

Inform the H+ community and us what potential solution you found (applied research Challenges) or what new and value-adding knowledge to the already existing knowledge on this topic your team uncovered (theoretical research Challenges). More information regarding the criteria for your team's poster and presentation during the Closing Event, can be found under "4.6: Team Challenge Outcome".

Mark your calendars!

The Honours+ closing event will take place on **Wednesday May 15th, at StayOkay Maastricht.**

Please refer to the Honours+ website, and your student email accounts to stay informed about the Honours+ Closing Event. **Your attendance is mandatory.**

When?	What?	Where?
17.30-18.00	Reception, registration With food & drinks	StayOkay Maastricht
18.00-21.00	Parallel sessions of pitches, with break in between	
21.00-22.00	Drinks and snacks	

6.4 INFORMAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Besides the formal Central Events, we also host a variety of fun and informal community events, where you can meet and connect with fellow honours students in an informal setting. These events are aimed at building bridges across faculty borders and aspire to create a community of honours students.

To sign up for the informal events, go to the Honours+ website and navigate to the 'Current Students' page. There you will find the [link](#) to the community events registration page. There is a minimum of 5 sign-ups per activity in order for the activity to take place.

Attending these events is optional, voluntarily and free of charge. However, once you sign up for such an event, we count on your presence and expect you to actually attend these events. Not showing up, or cancelling later than 24 hours in advance, without a valid and documented reason, will affect the activity for your fellow students and leads to extra costs for the organisation. You will in that case be faced with a no-show fee of € 25.

Please note that once you are signed up, it is not possible to cancel your registration yourself. If you must cancel your registration, please email honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl with your request. Registration or cancellation of a registration is allowed up to 24 hours in advance of the community event date.



What?	When?	Where?
Board Game Night	Thursday 22.02.2024, 18.00 hrs	Tapijn building X
Movie Night	Tuesday 12.03.2024, 18.00 hrs	Lumiere
Escape Room	Thursday 18.04.2024, 15.00 hrs	TBD

Please refer to the Honours+ website, Facebook/Instagram, and your student email accounts to stay informed about the informal community events.






7: Contact

Do you have any other questions; please contact the Honours+ Central Management Team or the honours coordinator at your faculty.

Honours+ Central Management Team

EDLAB		043 388 4173	Fabienne Crombach Senior Coordinator honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl
EDLAB			Tania Topa Coordinator honoursplus@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Honours Coordinators at Faculty Level

LAW		Sascha Hardt sascha.hardt@maastrichtuniversity.nl
SBE		Paulo Rodrigues p.rodrigues@maastrichtuniversity.nl
FPN		Michael Capalbo m.capalbo@maastrichtuniversity.nl
FASOS		Georgi Verbeeck georgi.verbeeck@maastrichtuniversity.nl
FHML		Juanita Vernooij j.vernooy@maastrichtuniversity.nl

APPENDIX I: Checklist Team Kick-Off

This checklist functions as a mere guideline that helps facilitating your team kick-off meeting. Use it to check if your team has discussed most of these topics and issues, so that you might prevent problems in team functioning along the way.

Description	Done!	Remarks
<u>Introduction:</u>		
Supervisor's introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide some information on your personal background (e.g. where you grew up, hobbies, personality traits). • Provide some information on your academic background; 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Students' introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide some information on your personal background (e.g. where you grew up, hobbies, personality traits). • Provide some information on your academic background; • What would you like to learn/improve? • Why are doing honours? • What strengths do you have that can contribute to the functioning of your Honours+ challenge team? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>Topic exploration and expectations:</u>		
Topic exploration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why this topic/issue/problem? • Some preliminary sources, directions etc. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Expectations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the Supervisor expect from the students? • What do the students expect from this challenge and the Supervisor? • What do you all consider to be the criteria/elements of a perfect team? • What does every individual need from the team to improve/optimize their individual contribution? • Set basic rules for behaviour within the team; • How to proceed if students/Supervisor last-minute cannot attend a scheduled meeting; • How will you all ensure an equal division of tasks? • How will the team ensure expected contributions and performance levels? • How will the team deal with free-riders? • How will the team deal with members who perform poorly? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Team:		
<p>Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dividing of roles among the team members. Who will be responsible for what activities (e.g. responsibilities of the discussion leader, presenter, scribe and other team members; backup roles, etc.)? What are your preferred working styles, particularly in relation to teamwork? An example of working styles is listed below as a guideline (Belbin 1996): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Leader</i>: clarifies goals, coordinates resources. <i>Completer/Finisher</i>: searches out errors, keeps a feeling of urgency in the team, and delivers on time. <i>Implementer</i>: translates concepts into practical plans. <i>Monitor/Evaluator</i>: sees all options, evaluates ideas, judges correctly. <i>Plant</i>: proposes new ideas, solves difficult problems. <i>Resource investigator</i>: explores opportunities, handles external contact. <i>Shaper</i>: gives coherence to team work, overcomes obstacles. <i>Specialist</i>: provides scarce knowledge and skills. <i>Team worker</i>: builds bridges, fosters team spirit, and calms rough waters. Discussion of the potential schedule for the meetings and planning. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of the ways of communication with each other and the Supervisor; The frequency of communication with the Supervisor; Provision of feedback (how to do it). 	<input type="checkbox"/>	

APPENDIX II: Team Charter

Research on team performance shows that high-quality team charters (written plans for how the team will manage its activities) are positively related to team performance.¹

Drafting a team charter increases team members' knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses within the team, helps to create shared expectations, and facilitates the establishment of effective group practices for dealing with high and poor performance.

A team charter is a strategic framework that helps team members to kick off projects and align on common vision. It is made to smoothly start collective projects, let people learn about each other and accumulate enough momentum to get going.

The Honours+ team charter has two parts

- *Part 1: The individual charter*

In the individual part you answer a number of questions about yourself and your expectations with respect to the performance of your H+ team. Part 1 is to be filled out by each team member individually prior to the first team meeting.

- *Part 2: The team charter*

In the team part, you discuss together your team roles, expectations and processes. You fill out the team charter as a group during your first team meeting, and **submit it to your H+ Supervisor** directly after the meeting.

- *Note: we advise you to refer back to your initially made agreements throughout the course of your Challenge, to see if you are still as a group adhering to these agreements and values.*

Suggestion for setup of team session to fill out the team component

- Duration: 30-45 minutes
- Materials:
 - Download a Team Canvas² via the [Honours+ documents page](#), and project it on a (online) whiteboard or print it on a big enough piece of paper.
 - Blocks of sticky notes, one for each participant, different colours;
 - Sharpies or markers to write on stickies (use thick enough pens so everyone can see the writing);
 - A device with a timer function.
- Go through each step with the team, making sure you ask the questions for each segment. Encourage people to write their answers on stickies and talk about them with the team. Make sure to agree on all fields. Your individual answers will provide input for these answers.
- Use timer for each step (max 10 minutes per step) to apply some time pressure so the team really focuses on getting to the point in each section discussion. If some conversations take rather long time or seem to touch

¹ Mathieu, J. E., & Rapp, T. L. (2009). Laying the foundation for successful team performance trajectories: The roles of team charters and performance strategies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(1), 90-103. doi:10.1037/a0013257

² <https://theteamcanvas.com/learn/>

upon bigger issues, consider parking those questions, and plan a separate meeting to address them specifically.

- Once you have agreed on every component, fill out the team component of the charter.
- Wrap up (5 minutes): talk about one single most important insight that each team member gained during this activity. Afterwards you will need to reflect on this in your Personal Development Plan (PDP) as well.
- IMPORTANT: there are no good or wrong answers here. Everyone's opinion is equally valuable and justified, and necessary to lay the foundation of good team functioning. Try to be supportive, have an open mind, but also do not be afraid to ask (critical) questions.

Part 1: Individual preparation

Please fill out this part of the team charter **individually, before meeting with your team for the first time**. During this first team meeting, you will share your answers with the group, and they form the basis of the team component.

<i>Your individual profile</i>
1. People & Roles: Please provide some information on your personal background (e.g. where you grew up, what courses you have followed, hobbies, personality traits).
2. People & Roles: What are your preferred working styles, particularly in relation to teamwork?
3. Goals: What do you consider the criteria/elements of a perfect team?
4. Personal Goals: What aspect of your personal agenda would you like to open up? (examples: availability conflict during certain period, motive for joining Honours etc)
5. Purpose: Why did you prefer this particular Challenge topic? What expertise and knowledge can you see that might be of use here?
6. Strengths & Assets: What strengths do you have that can contribute to the functioning of your Honours+ group?
7. Needs & Expectations: What do you need from the team to improve/optimize your individual contribution?

8. Weaknesses & Development areas: What aspect of personal development would you like to work on during Honours+?
9. Weaknesses & Development areas: What do you feel your team members or Supervisor should know about you?
<i>Your expectations regarding the team</i>
1. Goals: What would you ideally like to achieve as a team in this project?
2. Values: What are values that you would like to be at the core of your team? (examples: honesty, relationships, teamwork, profitability, and passion)
3. Purpose: What do you feel is the purpose and relevance of your team in this project and potential research question?
4. Needs & Expectations: What would make this team successful? How is that measured?
5. Needs & Expectations: What would you expect from your team member's work ethic? For example, showing up on time, indicating when members will miss a meeting, equal contribution, meeting deadlines.
6. Rules & Action points: What rules would you introduce as standard in your team with respect to accountability? (examples: how do we address free-riding, what is considered free-riding, how do we hold each other accountable)
7. Rules & Action Points: How do you prefer to make decisions in your team, even when working under stress?
8. Rules & Action Points: How do you prefer to communicate in a team and ensure the Supervisor and team members are updated?
9. Weaknesses & Developments areas: What obstacles for your team do you believe your team might likely come to face?

Part 2: Team roles, expectations and processes

In Part 1 each student answered the questions individually. During the team meeting, the idea is to come up with collective answers/decisions for all questions/themes.

<i>Team performance</i>
1. People & Roles: Team name
2. People & Roles: Roles we have in the team
3. Purpose: Why are we doing what we are doing in the first place? What direction would you like your research to go into?
4. Goals: What do we want to achieve as a group?
5. Goals: What are our key goals that are feasible, measurable and time-bounded?
6. Personal Goals: What are our individual personal goals?
7. Personal Goals: Are there personal agendas that we want to open up?
8. Values: What do we stand for, what are our guiding principles?
9. Values: What are our common values that we want to be at the core of our team?
10. Needs & Expectations: What does each of us needs to be successful in this team?
11. Needs & Expectations: What are our personal needs towards the team to be at our best?
12. Needs & Expectations: What work ethic do we expect from each other?
13. Needs & Expectations: How do we ensure our team is a safe space for all team members? How do we build trust? How do we go about holding each other accountable without compromising the safe space?

14. Rules & Action Points: What are the exact rules we want to introduce after doing this session?
15. Rules & Action Points: How do we communicate and keep everyone up to date?
16. Rules & Action Points: How do we make decisions?
17. Rules & Action Points: How do we execute and evaluate what we do? Think of celebrating achievements, overcoming setbacks. What is considered a success, a setback etc?
18. Strengths & Assets: What are the skills we have in our team that will help us achieve our goals?
19. Strengths & Assets: What are interpersonal/soft skills we have?
20. Strengths & Assets: What are we good at, individually and as a team?
21. Weaknesses & Development Areas: What are the weaknesses we have?
22. Weaknesses & Development Areas: What should our team members, client, coach or mentor know about us?
23. Weaknesses & Development Areas: What are some obstacles we see ahead of us that we are likely to face, and how do we propose to overcome them?

The Team Canvas

Version 1.0 | English | theteamcanvas.com

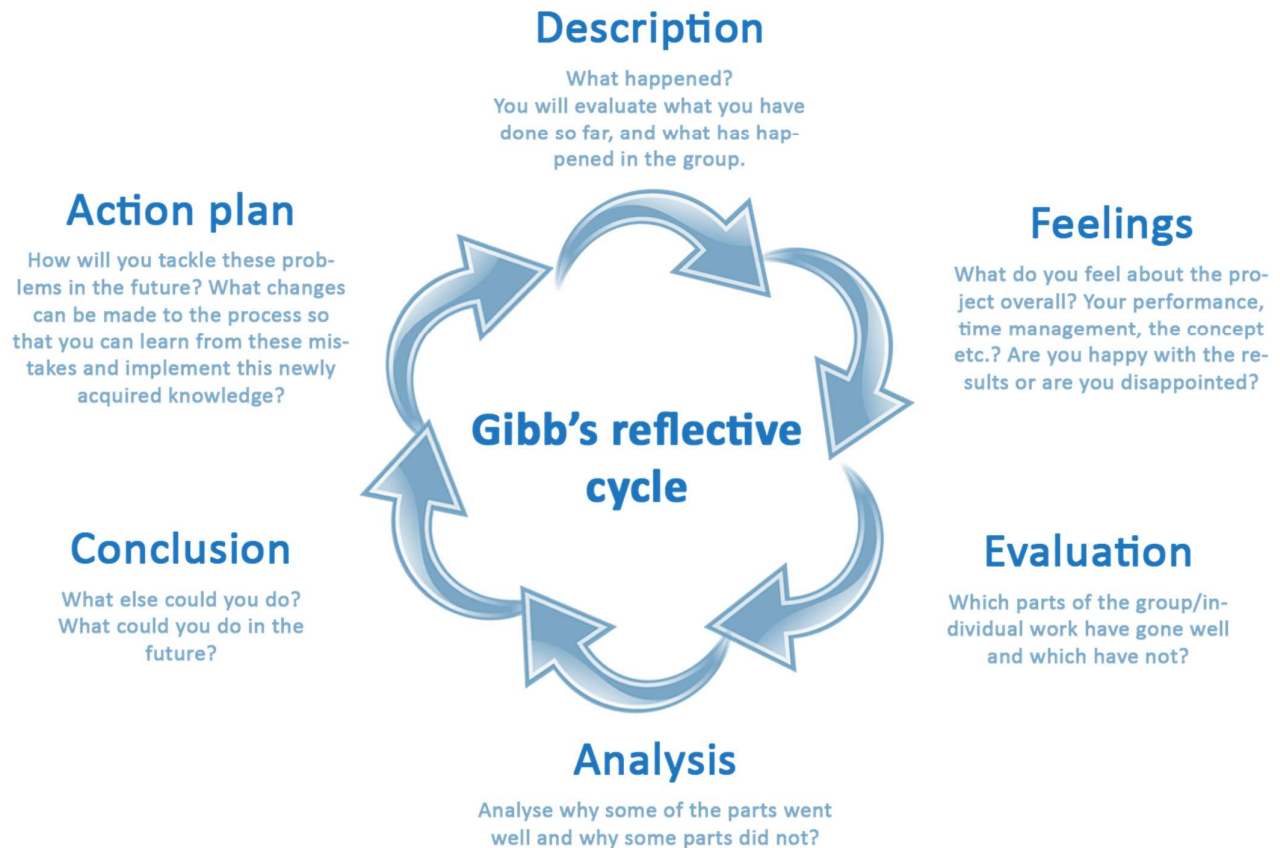
Most important things to talk about in the team to make sure your work as a group is productive, happy and stress-free

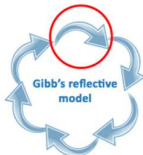
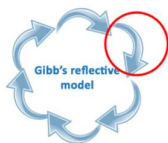
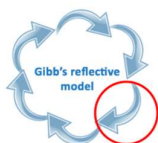
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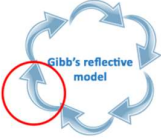
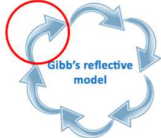
PEOPLE & ROLES What are our names and the roles we have in the team?	GOALS What we want to achieve as a group? What are our key goals that are feasible, measurable and time-bounded?	VALUES What do we stand for? What are guiding principles? What are our common values that we want to be at the core of our team?	RULES & ACTION POINTS What are the rules we want to introduce after doing this session? How do we communicate and keep everyone up to date? How do we make decisions? How do we execute and evaluate what we do?
PURPOSE Why are we doing what we are doing in the first place?			
PERSONAL GOALS What are our individual personal goals? Are there personal agendas that we want to open up?		NEEDS & EXPECTATIONS What each one of us needs to be successful? What are our personal needs towards the team to be at our best?	
STRENGTHS & ASSETS What are the skills we have in the team that will help us achieve our goals? What are interpersonal/soft skills that we have? What are we good at, individually and as a team?		WEAKNESSES & DEVELOPMENT AREAS What are the weaknesses we have, individually and as a team? What our teammates should know about us? What are some obstacles we see ahead us that we are likely to face?	

APPENDIX III: Gibbs Self-assessment form on reflective practices

Please, fill out this form individually and send it to your Supervisor before the Midterm Feedback Session. This form is based on Gibb's reflective cycle to help you explore and analyze the practices you perform:



	Individual part	Team part
Description 	What have you done so far? What happened within the first half of the programme? <hr/>	
Feelings 	How do you feel about the Challenge overall? About your performance, contribution to the research etc.?	How do you feel about the team performance and the development of the Challenge from the team's perspective? <hr/>
Evaluation 	Which parts of the individual work have gone well and which have not? <hr/>	Which parts of the group work have gone well and which have not? <hr/>
	What analysis have you done based on your evaluation? Which parts went well, which parts didn't and why?	What analysis have you done based on your evaluation? Which parts went well, which parts didn't and why?

<p>Analysis</p> 		
<p>Conclusion</p> 	<p>What could you have done in order to prevent certain matters?</p>	<p>What could have been done by your team in order to prevent certain matters?</p>
<p>Action plan</p> 	<p>What are you going to do next? How will you tackle these problems in the future?</p>	<p>What is your team going to do next? How will you tackle these problems in the future with your team?</p>

APPENDIX IV: Peer Evaluation Form

In Honours+, we try to provide students with a learning process aimed towards growth and development. The Supervisor assesses students as individuals on not just the quality of the outcome of the Challenge, but even more so on the process and their individual contribution to the team and the outcome. However, it sometimes may result challenging for the Supervisor to get a clear insight into the individual performance, contribution and development of each individual team member within a team, and thus issues in the team might go unaddressed.

These peer evaluations may reveal participation issues, but also personal achievements of individual group members, that the Supervisor might not otherwise know about. Completing peer evaluations allows groups to assess how they can improve and develop during their time in their Honours+ team. It can also provide a starting point for constructive discussions and reflections on how the group is functioning in general, and how every individual is contributing to and benefitting from the team process. This system of peer evaluations encourages thus as well teamwork, positive interdependence, and individual accountability.

Below we have formulated a rubric to allow for such a moment of peer evaluations. Filling out a rubric for each member of the group can help Supervisors to assess individual contributions to the group and the individual's role as a team player.

Instructions

1. For each category of **Part 1**, rate each team member and yourself using the 4-point scale given. Please think hard, honest and fair about each of the categories. How did you and each group member perform? It is not necessary that everyone get the highest score on each item. Different people will have different strengths and different contributions.
2. Below the rating, there is a space for comments. Please include examples or explanations that will help the mentor or coach understand your ratings.
3. Please do your evaluations independently – do not share or discuss your scoring, nor come to a decision based on a group opinion. We want an honest opinion from each of you, based on your perceptions and experiences.
4. Answer the open questions of **Part 2**. Only your answers to the last three open questions are to be shared back with your team members (not the scoring), but fully anonymized. Learning how to formulate constructive feedback is also part of the learning process, so we encourage you to use this opportunity to think of how your feedback may best benefit your team member and your team's process in general. The rubric scoring is only for the Supervisor to get further insights into everyone's individual contribution to the team and process of development.
5. Submit one form for each person, including yourself, with your name and the assessed person's name on each form to your Supervisor, before the stated deadlines:
 - 1st Peer evaluation: **Wednesday March 27th**, or at least before the date of your Midterm Feedback Session with your Supervisor.
 - 2nd Peer evaluation, **Friday May 31st**, or at least before the date of your Team Closing Session with your Supervisor.

6. Your Supervisor anonymizes each time the answers to the last three open questions, and sends them back to the corresponding team members, to reflect upon and discuss in a Midterm feedback session, and the team closing session at the end of the programme.

Part 1: Please fill in this rubric for each team member and yourself using the 4-point scale

Your scoring of each team member will not be shared with the team. It is only to be shared with the project mentor and competence coach.

Skills	Score: 4 Advanced - exceeds expectations	Score: 3 Competent - meets expectations	Score: 2 Progressing – does not fully meet expectations	Score: 1 Beginning - does not meet expectations
Contributions & Attitude	Always cooperative. Routinely offers useful ideas. Always displays positive attitude.	Usually cooperative. Usually offers useful ideas. Generally displays positive attitude.	Sometimes cooperative. Sometimes offers useful ideas. Rarely displays positive attitude.	Seldom cooperative. Rarely offers useful ideas. Is disruptive.
Cooperation with Others	Did more than others. Highly productive. Works extremely well with others.	Did own part of workload. Cooperative. Works well with others.	Could have shared more of the workload. Has difficulty. Requires structure, directions, and leadership.	Did not do any work. Does not contribute. Does not work well with others.
Focus, Commitment	Tries to keep people working together. Almost always focused on the task. Is very self-directed.	Does not cause problems in the group. Focuses on the task most of the time. Can count on this person.	Sometimes focuses on the task. Not always a good team member. Must be constantly reminded to keep on task.	Often is not a good team member. Does not focus on the task. Lets others do the work.
Team Role Fulfillment	Participates in all group meetings. Assumes a very constructive role in the team. Does the work that is assigned by the group.	Participates in most group meetings. Does most of the work assigned by the group.	Participates in some group meetings. Does some of the work assigned by the group.	Participates in few or no group meetings. Does little or no work assigned by the group.
Ability to Communicate	Always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Provides effective feedback. Relays a lot of relevant information, builds bridges.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Sometimes talks too much. Provides some effective feedback. Relays some basic information that relates to the topic.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Usually does most of the talking. Rarely listens to others. Provides little feedback. Relays very little information that relates to the topic.	Rarely listens to, shares with, or supports the efforts of others. Is always talking and never listens to others. Provides no feedback. Does not relay any information to teammates.
Accuracy	Work is complete, well organized, error-free, and done on time or early.	Work is generally complete, meets the requirements of the task, and is mostly done on time.	Work tends to be disorderly, incomplete, inaccurate, and is usually late.	Work is generally sloppy and incomplete, contains excessive errors, and is mostly late.
TOTAL POINTS				
Notes and Comments:				

Part 2: Please answer these questions for each team member

Your Supervisor anonymizes these answers, and sends them back to the corresponding team members, to reflect upon and discuss in a Midterm feedback session, and the team closing session at the end of the programme.

- 1) What action has this team member taken that was helpful for the group?
- 2) What action could this team member take to make the group more effective?
- 3) What is something I can learn from my team member?

Gueldenzoph, L. E., & May, G. L. (2002). Collaborative peer evaluation: Best practices for group member assessments. Business Communication Quarterly, 65(1), 9-20.

Johnston, L., & Miles, L. (2004). Assessing contributions to group assignments. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 29(6), 751-768.

Oakley, B., Felder, F. M., Brent, R., & Elhajj, I. (2004). Turning student groups into effective teams. Journal of Student Centered Learning, 2(1) 9-34.

APPENDIX V: Rules for Feedback

In life as much as in work, it's important to know how to provide feedback to others, effectively and constructively without causing offence. There are many opportunities in life for providing others with feedback, from commenting on the way that your colleague has carried out a task, to discussing your children's behaviour with them. In this Appendix we focus on the process of communicating with someone about something that they have done or said, with a view to changing or encouraging that behaviour. This is often called 'giving feedback', and when you do, you want your feedback to be effective.

The guidelines for giving constructive feedback fall into four categories: content, manner, timing, and frequency.

Content

Content is what you say in the constructive feedback.

- *In your first sentence, identify the topic or issue that the feedback will be about.*
- *Provide the specifics of what occurred.*

Without the specifics, you only have praise or criticism. Start each key point with an "I" message, such as, "I have noticed," "I have observed," "I have seen," or when the need exists to pass on feedback from others, "I have had reported to me." "I" messages help you be issue-focused and get into the specifics.

Manner

Manner is how you say the constructive feedback. As you may know, how you say something often carries more weight than what you have to say — manner is an important element when giving feedback.

Timing

Feedback is meant to be given in real-time, as close as possible to when the performance incident occurs so that the events are fresh in everyone's minds. When feedback is given well after the fact, the value of the constructive feedback is lessened.

When giving negative feedback, you may want to apply a different timeline: ASAR (as soon as reasonable/ready — that is, when *you're* ready). Sometimes when an incident happens, you aren't feeling too good about it, and you need time to cool off and get your thoughts in order before you give negative feedback (so that your manner displays a tone of concern). Doing that may mean giving the feedback tomorrow rather than right now, but tomorrow is still timely, and your feedback will come across as far more constructive.

Frequency

This last guideline is the most important because it makes all the other guidelines work. Use constructive feedback regularly to acknowledge real performance. Try to catch and respond to people doing their job right just as much as you catch and respond to them doing something not quite right — and don't acknowledge how they are performing only sporadically.

Constructive feedback is information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observations.

It comes in two varieties: Praise and criticism are both personal judgments about a performance effort or outcome, with praise being a favorable judgment and criticism, an unfavorable judgment. Information given is general and vague, focused on the person, and based on opinions or feelings. Don't get this wrong, to give praise for example is a good thing when it is deserved, but it's not constructive feedback since it's a personal judgment. Remember that you are making no comment on what type of person they are, or what they believe or value. You are only commenting on how they behaved. Do not be tempted to discuss aspects of personality, intelligence or anything else. Only behaviour.

Feedback should describe the effect of the person's behaviour on you. After all, you do not know the effect on anyone or anything else. You only know how it made **you** feel or what **you** thought. Presenting feedback as your opinion makes it much easier for the recipient to hear and accept it, even if you are giving negative feedback. After all, they have no control over how you felt, any more than you have any control over their intention. This approach is a blame-free one, which is therefore much more acceptable. Some useful phrases for giving feedback include: "When you did X, I felt Y". "I noticed that when you said X, it made me feel Y". "I really liked the way you did X and particularly Y about it". "It made me feel really X to hear you say Y in that way".

In positive feedback situations, express appreciation. Appreciation alone is praise. Yet when you add it to the specifics of constructive feedback, your message carries an extra oomph of sincerity. For example: "Sue, your handling of all the processing work while John did the callbacks made for an efficient effort and showed good teamwork. Everything you did was accurate, as well. Thanks so much for helping out. Such initiative is a real value to the team." Always keep in mind to give at least as much positive feedback as you do negative. Positive feedback stimulates the reward centers in the brain, leaving the recipient open to taking new direction. Meanwhile, negative feedback indicates that an adjustment needs to be made and the threat response turns on and defensiveness sets in. You don't need to avoid negative, or corrective, feedback altogether. Just make sure you follow it up with a suggested solution or outcome.

In negative feedback situations, express concern. A tone of concern communicates a sense of importance and care and provides the appropriate level of sincerity to the message. Tones such as anger, frustration, disappointment, and the ever-popular sarcasm tend to color the language of the message and turn attempts at negative feedback into criticism. The content of the message gets lost in the noise and harshness. The purpose of negative feedback is to create awareness that can lead to correction or improvement in performance. If you can't give negative feedback in a helpful manner, in the language and tone of concern, you defeat its purpose. Your feedback usually won't be productive if it's focused on making the other person feel bad or make them look foolish in front of peers.

Be specific. People generally respond better to specific, positive direction. Avoid saying things like, "You need to be more talkative in meetings." It's too ambiguous and can be interpreted in a lot of personal ways. Say something specific and positive pointed at the task you want accomplished, such as, "You're smart. I want to hear at least one opinion from you in every meeting we're in together going forward."

Be direct when delivering your message. Get to the point and avoid beating around the bush. Both negative and positive feedback should be given in a straightforward manner.

Be sincere and avoid giving mixed messages. Sincerity says that you mean what you say with care and respect. Mixed messages are referred to as "yes, but" messages. For example, "John, you have worked hard on this project, but. . . ." What follows is something the person is not doing well and is the real point of the message. The word "but," along with its cousins "however" and "although," when said in the middle of a thought, create contradictions or mixed messages. In essence, putting "but" in the middle tells the other person, "Don't believe a thing I said before."

State observations, not interpretations. Observations are what you see occur; interpretations are your analysis or opinion of what you see occur. Tell what you've noticed, not what you think of it, and report the behaviour you notice at a concrete level, instead of as a characterization of the behaviour. Observations have a far more factual and nonjudgmental aspect than do interpretations.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK: USEFUL TIPS

It's also important to reflect on what skills you need to receive feedback. Especially when it is something you do not want to hear, and not least because not everyone is skilled at giving feedback.

Be open to the feedback. In order to process feedback, you need to at least listen to it. Just listen, don't think already about what you are going to say in reply. Also notice the non-verbal communication and listen to what your team member, coach or mentor is not saying, as well as what they are.

For example, you might say: "So when you said ..., would it be fair to say that you meant ... and felt ...?" "Have I understood correctly that when I did ..., you felt ...?" Make sure that your reflection and questions focus on **behaviour**, and not personality. Even if the feedback has been given at another level, you can always return the conversation to the behavioural, and help the person giving feedback to focus on that level.

Thank you. Always thank the person who has given you the feedback. They have already seen that you have listened and understood, now accept it. Acceptance in this way does not mean that you need to act on it. However, you do then need to consider the feedback, and decide how, if at all, you wish to act upon it. That is entirely up to you, but remember that the person giving the feedback felt strongly enough to bother mentioning it to you. Do them the courtesy of at least giving the matter some consideration. If nothing else, with negative feedback, you want to know how **not** to generate that response again.