

**Eastern Lebanon County  
High School**

**GRADUATION  
PROJECT**



## **Definition of the Graduation Project**

The Graduation Project must be successfully completed as part of a student's graduation requirements. Working in concert with an academic advisor, a student will develop and complete a project of educational significance. Although various forms of assistance will be made available, the primary initiative for completion of the project lies with the students. Selection of a project topic will be derived from the student based on such factors as interest and knowledge; hence, few limits will be placed on what subjects a student may choose. While prior knowledge may be advantageous, a project topic should not be rejected solely on the basis of lack of background knowledge.

## **Goals of the Graduation Project**

A goal of the Graduation Project is to challenge the student to go beyond those learnings that occur as the result of his/her prescribed educational program. The student is challenged to complete a project that demonstrates his/her intellectual, physical and creative abilities. In doing so, the student will be fulfilling a second goal that relates to the Pennsylvania Curriculum Regulations. Chapter 5 Sect. 5.214 states that students will "apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and communicate significant knowledge and understanding." The Graduation Project provides a forum for students to fulfill these requirements.

Personal growth and satisfaction are additional goals associated with the Graduation Project. The student will derive a sense of accomplishment through the completion and "ownership" of a body of work that is a reflection of his/her interests and abilities. Opportunities to expand his/her personal knowledge, explore career paths, and apply learning to real-life situations will serve to benefit the student's growth and promote lifelong learning.

## **Choosing a Graduation Project**

When considering and deciding upon a graduation project, there are certain qualifications that must be met if the project is to be accepted. The project must:

- be independent of any school related project
- reflect district student learning outcomes
- involve some type of research
- demonstrate the ability to analyze, synthesize, and apply information
- demonstrate the ability to present information effectively
- be a learning activity
- benefit the student and/or society

## **Types and Descriptions of Graduation Projects**

### **Community Service**

The community service project will provide the student with an opportunity to explore ways to enhance community life. The project intends to foster awareness of the importance of volunteerism and enables the student to gain experiences outside of a traditional educational environment. This project requires the student to find an acceptable mentor closely related to the chosen community service to assist and guide the student through the actual community service work. The following are some examples of the types of volunteerism available through county agencies, community groups, and the school environment:

- child care
- support groups
- youth camps
- tutoring
- elderly care
- sports camps
- political issues
- environmental issues
- community organizations
- other service projects approved by the advisor

### **Career Research**

The career research project will provide the student with the opportunity to explore a career field. The project intends to expose the student to different professions within a career field and allows for investigative study for future reference in choosing a career path after graduation. The following are possible career fields available for study:

- medical
- cosmetology
- engineering
- legal
- education
- social services
- automotive
- computer technology
- banking
- other career fields approved by the advisor

### **Creative Study**

The creative study project will offer the student the opportunity to exhibit, demonstrate, or perform in the area of the arts. The project intends to provide the student with a venue to express or demonstrate his/her talents and creativeness based upon research and knowledge of the chosen subject area. This project requires the student to find a mentor skilled in the area of the creative study to assist and guide the student through the creative study. The following are possible suggestions for this project:

- an original or interpretive work of art, musical composition, or dance performance
- a creation or demonstration within the culinary arts, floral design
- an original design or reproduction of a period piece of furniture
- a demonstration of an equestrian or canine showmanship
- other areas approved by the advisor

# The Requirements of the Graduation Project

## I. Descriptive Student Time Log

- A. must show a minimum of 30 hours of actual time engaged in the activity
- B. must be volunteer and not paid work
- C. time spent paper writing and in preparation for the oral presentation are NOT to be included in the log
- D. must use the specific log designed for the graduation project
- E. must obtain the signature of the academic advisor and project mentor
- F. due to Academic Advisor one month prior to presentation date

## II. Personal Reaction Paper

- A. must be one page minimum, typed in a standard size 12 font, double-spaced
- B. paper must consist of two sections
  - 1. section one: a basic description of what was done for the project
  - 2. section two: must address two areas
    - a. what was personally learned from the project
    - b. how might the experience be beneficial in the future
  - 3. must be written in the 1st person (I, me, my, mine)
  - 4. due to Academic Advisor one month prior to presentation date

## III. Research Paper

- A. must follow ELCO Research Guidelines
  - 1. title page
  - 2. thesis/outline page
  - 3. paper with end notes
  - 4. works cited page
- B. must have a minimum of three (3) sources
  - 1. no more than two internet sources
  - 2. at least one book or periodical must be used
- C. must be three pages of research writing not including title page, thesis/outline page, and works cited page
- D. submission options
  - 1. write an original paper for the project due to Academic Advisor one month prior to presentation date for review by the assessment committee
  - 2. submit a paper, completed for a course at ELCO, to the Academic Advisor by the academic advisory prior to the project presentation
    - a. must meet all of the research paper requirements
    - b. signed by both the course teacher and Academic Advisor acknowledging the appropriateness and acceptance of the paper

#### **IV. Oral Presentation**

- A. must last a minimum of eight minutes
- B. must have a visual aid
- C. if a video is used in the presentation, it may not be longer than three minutes and can not be considered the only visual aid
- D. must cover the following areas:
  - 1. basic description of project
  - 2. background information of why the project was chosen
  - 3. the benefits from having a project mentor
  - 4. information on the people met as a result of the project
  - 5. discussion of the people met as a result of the project
  - 6. what was learned from doing the project
  - 7. how the project was personally beneficial
  - 8. an overall response to the project

### **Responsibilities of the Graduation Project**

#### **Student**

The student is responsible for the successful completion of the Graduation Project under the guidelines established by the school.

#### **Academic Advisor**

The Academic Advisor is responsible for providing the necessary guidelines for the student to successfully choose and complete the project. The advisor will meet with the student during academic advisement to provide the appropriate assistance and motivation as necessary.

#### **Assessment Committees**

The assessment committees are responsible for reviewing and evaluating the final written papers and oral presentations of the student. The assessment committees consists of two members of the ELCO High School faculty, guidance department, and/or administration.

#### **Graduation Project Coordinator**

The Graduation Project Coordinator is responsible for the overall mechanics, scheduling, and conflict resolution of the project and will provide support to the academic advisors and students.

#### **Administration**

The administration is ultimately responsible for handling any situation in which a student does not receive a successful rating after presentation of the Graduation Project.

## **Timeline for the Graduation Project**

The timeline intends to provide a guideline for students and parents so that the graduation project is completed in the senior year. Periodically, forms will be sent home to account for student progression on the project. A parent must sign each form by the deadlines set. Academic Advisors will file these forms in individual student folders as a record indicating progress toward the completion of the project.

### **Junior Year**

#### A. September Academic Advisement Meeting

1. Information detailing the Graduation Project is issued to the student
2. Letter is sent home informing student and parents of the Graduation Project
  - a. signed by the parent and the student
  - b. returned to the Academic Advisor by the next academic advisory

#### B. November Academic Advisement Meeting

1. Student observes “dry run” project presentations by seniors
2. Student inquires about project needs, materials, strategies

#### C. January Academic Advisement Meeting

A form requiring a written description of ideas of the chosen project is sent home and signed by parent, student, and returned to the Academic Advisor at the next academic advisement

#### D. March Academic Advisement Meeting

1. Student observes “dry run” project presentations by seniors
2. Student inquires about project needs, materials, strategies

#### E. April Academic Advisement Meeting

A letter is sent home asking the student to choose a presentation date in either November or March of the senior year. The notice with the chosen date must be returned to the school by the assigned due date.

### **Senior Year**

Final Project Check form is completed by the Academic Advisor at the advisory meeting prior to the project presentation to determine which components of the project have been satisfactorily completed according to the requirements.

**Junior Year  
September Academic Advisement**

Dear Parent:

Information describing the ELCO Graduation Project has been issued to your son/daughter. Your child must complete this Graduation Project in his/her senior year in order to receive a diploma. It is important for you and your child to carefully examine this information so that you and your child are aware of his/her responsibilities.

Please sign and return this letter to your child's academic advisor.

We have read and understood the information in the Graduation Project information. We understand that the Graduation Project is a graduation requirement and must be successfully completed in order for my child to graduate.

---

Parent Signature

---

Date

---

Student Signature

---

Date

**Junior Year  
January Academic Advisement**

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_

Graduation Project Type: (circle one)

Career Research

Community Service

Creative Study

Written Description of Project Ideas:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Advisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Junior Year  
April Academic Advisement**

Dear Parents:

Your student will be successfully completing his/her Graduation Project during his/her senior year of high school. This project has been ongoing since the beginning of the junior year.

It is now time to schedule the final presentation which will be made to an assessment committee that will evaluate the project. If all four components of the Graduation Project are successfully rated, the project is completed and the student qualifies for graduation. A letter will be mailed home detailing the committee's ratings after completion of the project.

Please have your student take a moment and designate below the letter when an appointment may be scheduled for the final presentation. This year we will hear the oral presentations on November \_\_\_\_, 200\_ and March \_\_\_\_, 200\_. The written reports, the personal reaction paper and the research paper, will be submitted to the Academic Advisor for prior review on October \_\_\_\_, 200\_ and February \_\_\_\_, 200\_, respectively. Please return this form to the school by the assigned due date. Also, be aware that a postcard will be sent home again asking for a presentation date. The postcard should be promptly mailed back to school and is the school's method for final confirmation of the requested dates. Your child's prompt response is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Edward Felty  
Principal

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Please schedule an appointment to present my graduation project on:**

November \_\_\_\_\_ or March \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Final Project Checklist with Academic Advisor

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Project Check: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduation Project Type:

Career Research \_\_\_\_\_ Community Service \_\_\_\_\_ Creative Study \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Descriptive Time Log:** Present \_\_\_\_\_ Not Present \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Personal Reaction Paper:** Present \_\_\_\_\_ Not Present \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Research Paper:** Prior Academic Submission \_\_\_\_\_

Original Research Paper \_\_\_\_\_

Not Present \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Oral Presentation with Visual** Presented \_\_\_\_\_ Did Not Present \_\_\_\_\_

Visual Present \_\_\_\_\_ Visual Not Present \_\_\_\_\_ Timing \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Advisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**ELCO High School  
Student Descriptive Time Log**

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Time Logged	Description of Activity

**Total Hours:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Common Concerns and Questions

1. ***When may I begin to work on my Graduation Project?***

Work on the Graduation Project should commence no earlier than the first semester of the junior school year. Projects are to be presented in the senior year.

2. ***May I work with another student to complete the project?***

No, each student must complete all aspects of the project individually. This does not mean students may not work on the same type of project at the same place during the same time. It is important, however, that each student has an individual experience and completes independent work related to his or her graduation project.

3. ***Who do I go to in order to find out if my Graduation Project choice is approved?***

Graduation Project approvals are done by the academic advisors. If the advisor is not certain whether the project is acceptable, he/she will ask the Graduation Project Coordinator. It must be kept in mind that the content of all Graduation Projects must comply with ELCO High School and ELCO School District policies.

4. ***May my Graduation Project be an extension of a school project?***

The research paper of the Graduation Project can be submitted if it has already been graded as part of a course, and meets all requirements of the graduation project. However, no other part of the Graduation Project can be used if it has already been graded as part of a course requirement. If there is an interest in an area of study already covered in a course, the student may explore the area as long as the information gathered for the project is totally new and totally independent of the class work.

5. ***How do I choose a mentor?***

The mentor choice will vary depending on the type of Graduation Project chosen. If community service is the choice, the mentor should be directly involved with the community service work. If career research is chosen, the people who are shadowed will be the mentor. If creative study is chosen, the mentor must be someone directly involved or well-accomplished in the area of creativity. Parents are not acceptable mentor choices. Mentor concerns need to be discussed with the academic advisors and the Graduation Project coordinator.

6. ***Must my personal reaction paper and my research paper be typed/word processed?***

Yes, all papers are to be typed/word processed. In addition, they must be double-spaced and in a 12-point font, preferably Geneva, Helvetica, or Times.

7. ***If I use photographs as part of my oral presentation, how should I display them?***

Photographs should be displayed on a poster board, in a three-ring binder, or in a scrapbook. Photos should have captions indicating what they are representing. Loose pictures are not acceptable.

8. ***I would like to participate in the Science Fair, and was told I can count this as my graduation project. Is this correct?***

Students who choose to participate in projects with presentations, such as the Science Fair, FBLA, FFA, STA, e.g., can use these projects as their Graduation Project. All of the academic advisement paperwork is to be completed as required, with all of these projects being labeled according to their purpose, most are creative study or career research projects. The mentors will be the activity advisor and will complete all paperwork for the project, including the presentation form, and submit them to the Graduation Project Coordinator.

9. ***Can I use a powerpoint presentation as part of my project presentation?***

A power point presentation can be used to show pictures, diagrams, and labels used in the work of the project. It can not be used as the oral presentation, merely as a display source.

10. ***I am still confused about the research paper. What paper can I use and how do I get a paper accepted?***

As an example: As part of your Social Studies course you are required to write a research paper about the Boston Tea Party and the repercussions stemming from it. You submit the paper to your Social Studies teacher, it is graded and returned to you with a grade of an 84% B. The paper has a title page, five (5) pages of research, utilizes endnotes, and has a works cited page with nine sources. The paper has a) met the criteria for being academically acceptable – you earned a grade of an 84% B; and b) has all of the criteria required for a Graduation Project paper EXCEPT a thesis/outline page. **Step One:** retype your paper correcting any misspellings or mistakes. **Step Two:** type a thesis/outline page to be included in this version of your paper. **Step Three:** give the paper to your teacher to review and sign. (NOTE: It is at the discretion of your teacher assigning the paper to review and determine its acceptability.) **Step Four:** take the paper to your Academic Advisor to sign, your Academic Advisor will place it in your Graduation Project folder. The paper requirement has now been completed for the Graduation Project.