Lumen Prize Application
2026

Introduction

As a student who is being nominated by a member of the Elon faculty or staff for the Lumen Prize, you are invited to complete and submit your application no later than **5:00 pm on Tuesday, March 3.** Completed applications must be sent through the online portal. Your letters of recommendation must be submitted by **5:00 pm, Tuesday, March 17.**

Please follow these directions on the following pages fully and faithfully. NOTE: There have been some changes from prior years' application forms; you must use this current version.

Your mentor and recommender will receive an invitation to upload their letters only AFTER your application has been submitted.

Applications should demonstrate the candidate's outstanding record of achievement, exceptional potential, and dedication to pursuing an intellectually rigorous and creative program of study. In order to be considered, applications must:

- address the candidate's interests, values, and motivation;
- specify how the candidate's proposed program of study demonstrates a commitment to the vision of the Lumen Prize to pursue ambitious and serious intellectual goals;
- bear evidence of careful editing and preparation;
- follow the Committee's directions and suggestions.

Conditions of Eligibility

Candidates must be completing their second year at Elon or, if having transferred credits to Elon, be completing their second year of higher education with at least one full semester at Elon. Applicants are expected to demonstrate a commitment to pursuing at least two additional academic years of study as Elon students. Finally, A cumulative GPA of 3.50 or above is strongly recommended at the time of application. Successful applicants will be expected to maintain a GPA at or above 3.50 throughout the duration of their award, and so applicants below this threshold must address this in the Feasibility section of their application. *Note: In submitting their application, candidates give permission to the selection committee to obtain a summary of any judicial record concerning honor code violations.*

Mentors must be full-time faculty members, or staff with faculty rank, on a long term contract with Elon University. Adjunct faculty and visiting professors are not eligible to serve as mentors.

Selection Criteria

The committee will select Lumen Prize winners based on applications that most compellingly address the following criteria:

- **Intellectual inquiry and integration**. The application articulates a set of goals that are clear, focused, and of high intellectual caliber; proposed activities/experiences relate and cumulatively support the applicant's goals; the balance between breadth/diversity of experiences and depth of engagement supports an exceptional undergraduate experience.
- **Intellectual curiosity and reflection.** The applicant conveys an intrinsic and impassioned engagement with proposed area of inquiry and expression, and an active openness to discovery and reflection.
- **Originality/distinction.** The application will be evaluated on the degree to which the proposed plan of study sets it apart and merits distinction. [Proposals may cut across multiple disciplines, be innovative within a particular discipline or program, or bridge traditional modes of academic inquiry with experiences outside the academy.]
- **Feasibility.** Application presents a set of proposed experiences that are plausible in light of availability, timeline, and projected material and financial supports.

Applicants chosen for the final round of consideration will then be interviewed.

Expectations if Awarded

- The primary expectation is that you continue to make steady progress on the experiences and work you are setting forth in your proposal. It is understood that specific details of your work will evolve in consultation with your mentor over the two-year journey. In order to maintain regular communication with the Program Director, you will be submitting a plan at the beginning of each semester outlining what you hope to do that term and a report at the end of the term on how things went.
- So that your intellectual/creative work and the supportive engagement of your mentor are appropriately reflected on your transcript and other institutional records, you are to enroll under your mentor's name in 8 hours of *LUM 4998: Thesis Research* over the course of your junior and senior years. You and your mentor may decide how those hours get spaced out to best fit your overall program of study; enrolling in such hours during Winter and Summer terms is perfectly acceptable if that helps your scheduling. If you are in a program already requiring such hours [e.g., Honors or Elon College Fellows], *the same hours will fulfill both programs' expectations.* [Honors Fellows will enroll under *HNR 4998: Honors Thesis*.]
- You will be asked to sign a letter of agreement setting forth a few other basic expectations such as remaining in good standing at the University and maintaining an overall grade point average at or above a 3.50.

The Application

Applications are to be submitted online; the present document provides instructions for content to be included in each section.

Initialize your Application

Because we are using a third-party platform for this application, which is normally used for hiring employees, there is an initial screen that asks for applicants to upload their resume. THIS IS NOT NECESSARY AND YOU MAY CLICK "CONTINUE" WITHOUT UPLOADING A RESUME. IF YOU DO UPLOAD A RESUME, IT WILL NOT BE USED IN OUR EVALUATION OF YOUR APPLICATION. Sorry for this clumsiness, we are not allowed to edit this screen out.

The real first page of the online application will ask for basic information. This page includes:

Personal Details. Please fill out accurately, and make sure all required fields have been completed.

Major

Second Major, Minor, and Second Minor. These are optional; none is required or expected.

Notification of Travel Outside the United States. If your project might include travel outside the United States, move the slider to "YES" and fill in the text boxes which will appear. This will notify the GEC of your intention to travel, and they will provide a preliminary risk assessment which will be made available to you, your mentor, and the committee.

Submitting this form will initialize your application and send notifications to your mentor, recommender, and (if applicable) the GEC. You may continue work, or close and return to the application later.

The items above cannot be edited after this form has been submitted. If changes are necessary after submission, contact the Director.

REFERENCES

Mentor Identification. Your mentor will receive an automated email when you complete and submit your application. It is essential that you tell them well before then of your intention to apply. If your project will be co-mentored, please use the slots for the first and second references for the co-mentors, and select "co-mentor" from the drop down menu.

Recommender Identification. Enter the name of an individual who will write a secondary letter of recommendation to accompany your application. The recommender should have some familiarity with your proposed project, and should be in a position to comment meaningfully on your potential for fulfilling the scholarly/creative work you are proposing. Your recommender will receive an automated email as soon as you click 'submit' on this page.

Non-Elon Recommender: While most Recommenders are members of Elon's faculty and staff, it is permissible to choose a Recommender from outside Elon.

Write your Application

After initialization, you may return to the online application as often as you like to enter and edit items in the main body, described below. Note that any content saved online will be available to your mentor to view.

Project Title

Provide a title that clearly communicates the main focus of the work you are proposing to complete.

Abstract

In no more than 250 words provide an abstract of what you propose to explore. A good abstract should offer a concise summary of the project you are proposing to undertake and be accessible to a broad audience. Should you be awarded a Lumen Prize, your abstract may be used in a press release or a program booklet.

Personal Statement

The Lumen Prize is intended to support serious scholars (not merely their projects) at a formative stage in their intellectual development. Help us understand you as an emerging scholar. Please do not refer to your proposed project here. Instead, describe your intellectual journey so far, with particular emphasis on the types of questions and experiences that have sparked your interest in scholarly/creative activity (your answer could include references to influential persons, texts, courses, works of art, experiences, etc.). Finally, how do you see the Lumen Prize helping you to extend and enhance your intellectual journey?

Project Description

The following three subsections constitute the core of what you are proposing to undertake during your remaining program of study as an Elon student. A strong statement will make clear how the proposal is challenging, intellectually significant, and distinctive. *You need to make clear how the unifying goal you intend to explore and the means by which you intend to pursue it fit within your discipline – that is, how the work you propose is* ***built upon and contributes to*** *the work of other scholars or artists in your field*. Several things will facilitate this. Incorporating reference citations and noting specific sources that have informed you [e.g., archives, film banks, audio recordings] give evidence that you have begun

acquiring a discipline-based foundation for your work. Suggesting specific programs, sites, or conferences to attend gives evidence for how you might become further connected to a community of fellow scholars/creators and are therefore appropriate to include. When you set forth the envisioned products of your work, thinking about the appropriate audience(s) and venues with whom you will share your work is important. In all such cases, their relevance should be made clear to the committee. As the review committee comprises faculty from various disciplines, the statement should be written so that educated non-specialists might understand it. *These three sections that constitute the project description may not exceed 10,000 characters (including spaces; approx. 1500 words) in total*.

Applicants should clearly indicate how being awarded the Lumen Prize would offer intellectual opportunities and challenges beyond those currently available to them (through, for example, other internal or external scholarship programs or grants, including Honors, Fellows, and similar programs).

Organize the project description using the following section headings:

Focus: Provide a clear statement of *the guiding intellectual/creative question, issue, or problem* that motivates and directs your proposal. Although applications will vary in terms of the sets of experiences and projects being proposed, your focus statement should clarify the scholarly questions or issues that lend coherence to and provide a rationale for the importance of those endeavors you propose. Furthermore, whether your proposal involves traditional research in a discipline or disciplines, an applied or creative program, or some combination of all three, a well-articulated focus statement will also place the proposed project into a wider intellectual or artistic context. Clarify how your project relates to and is a valuable extension of the lines of inquiry, discourse, or technique that have come before it and that guide it.

Scholarly process: Provide a clear description of the disciplinary frameworks, intellectual and/or creative tools and skills, and research methodologies that will allow you to address the question presented in the previous section in an intellectually meaningful and effective way. Identify the frameworks, tools, skills, and methodologies with which you are already knowledgeable, and describe your plans to develop the necessary expertise in the ones with which you are not currently knowledgeable. Describe how this process will forward your intellectual and/or artistic development.

Proposed products: Describe the specific products that will emerge from the proposed experiences. These may include but are not limited to work such as: scholarly work for publication or presentation; research reports; artistic products or performances [with supporting written statements]; project reports [outlining the basis for and evaluating the outcomes of a service project]; technical creations [such as computer programs] with accompanying description; interviews with accompanying analysis; personal journals. Applications may focus on one major product or multiple related products.

Feasibility

While the Lumen Prize encourages ambitious intellectual endeavor, the proposal needs to be realistic. Your application should address projected needs, in terms of access to specific scholarly or artistic materials, necessary equipment and supplies, and required skills. A projected budget and summary timeline are also required.

Feasibility Statement: If necessary, in this section you may briefly address potential challenges, key logistical issues, or undeveloped skills that may require further explanation. Please note that you may *not* use this space to expand upon your methodology, which should be described fully in the Scholarly Process section.

This section typically does not exceed 200-300 words, though it may run longer for those conducting research with human subjects (see *Special Note* below).

As illustrative examples, if your project involves interviews with non-English speakers, you might explain how they will be handled; if your project involves working with archived material with limited access, explain how you will obtain access; if your project requires some technical skills you do not currently possess [e.g., developing a videographic record], explain how you will acquire those skills. Feel free to use bulleted points when helpful.

Special Note: *Does your proposed scholarship or creative activity include working with individuals or communities (local, national, or international) as subjects of study?*

If you plan to conduct human subjects research as defined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB; www.elon.edu/IRB), briefly discuss your plans to have your study protocols reviewed by Elon's IRB and other IRB/ERB, if applicable. If your proposed scholarship or creative activity includes work with communities as subjects of study, especially those that may be considered vulnerable or marginalized, please describe your existing relationship with the community and/or plans for making contacts and developing working relationships within the community. In addition, discuss specific expertise provided by the mentor that will enable and facilitate interactions with the community of interest, and/or plans for developing the student's own expertise to do so within the context of the proposed project. If you propose to address sensitive subject areas (e.g. interpersonal violence, suicidality), please also discuss your plan for managing safety concerns.

A couple resources that may be helpful are Fair Trade Learning from the Community-Based Global Learning Collaborative and this review of community-based research practices. (The latter is written from a public-health perspective but is not limited to that field.)

Budget: Realizing that this is somewhat tentative at present, provide *a bulleted list* of how you might allocate your funds. Possible areas of expenditure include tuition, study abroad program fees, materials and supplies, conferences, airfare, hotels and housing, institute fees, and so forth. This is open to change as your work progresses, but a tentative budget should reflect that you are thinking through the realities of implementing your proposal. If it is helpful to provide justification for

an unusual expense, you may add a very brief note of 1-2 lines to any item in this section (this is rare and should be used sparingly).

Bibliography: Provide full bibliographic information for all supporting work that you cited in your narrative, using the style conventions relevant to your discipline. Remember that in addition to traditional print sources, you may also have cited audio recordings, artworks, and similar non-print sources.

Timeline: For each semester (Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring) of your two-year project, provide a tentative list of the salient experiences and products involved in completing your proposed work (you may also include experiences relevant to your general intellectual development, even if they are not directly related to your proposed work). Some semesters (and summers) will likely involve more activities than others; some products may be "steps along the way" to a larger final product. However, a timeline for the various stages involved in such an undertaking is beneficial to your planning and to the committee's review. Thinking about how you might space out your 8 hours of thesis research will also be helpful to you.

Upload your Transcript

Upload a) your transcript (required).

A screenshot of your transcript from OnTrack will suffice. Be sure to check to make sure the image includes your cumulative GPA. If you have charts, graphs, or images that could not be included in the online application text boxes, please include them as separate images. Please be sure that any material included in the Appendix other than the transcript includes a clear indication of where it belongs in your application (for example, number necessary charts and refer to them using that number in your application). Appendices should not include any extensive written text, just the material that cannot be accepted by the on-line application text boxes.

There is one more screen to upload other supporting documents, but please limit these to files that directly contribute to the project description.

Submit

You will not be allowed to submit unless all required documents and information has been completed. A screen will list any incomplete items before you are allowed to finally submit. Remember, that once you click submit, you may no longer edit your application.

All letters must be received and your online application must be completed and digitally signed by both you and your mentor(s) before 5:00 pm on March 12, 2025.

The applicant submission must occur first, after which your application will be locked for editing. Mentors will be automatically notified and asked to review and sign off on the completed application.

Mentor letters and Recommendation letters may be submitted after applicant sign-off; only Recommendation letters may be submitted after mentor sign-off.