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# Appendix D Capstone Expectations

# What is a capstone? What is required?

A capstone is a project in which students may culminate their learning by completing a research project under the supervision of a faculty adviser. Depending on the program, students may work on a capstone either individually or in a team. Students completing the MS Information Technology Leadership program are encouraged to complete the capstone by participating in a team.  In some cases, students may partner with an external company, or work on a project associated with their employer as result that is provided to the company.  For projects that work with an external organization, the student needs to review the Disclaimer requirements and receive permission from the external partner.

Capstones are one semester projects which are completed at the end of the student course studies.  In most cases the capstone should be the last course the student completes.  In order for a student to participate in the capstone, the student needs to complete the pre-semester requirements.

In most cases, students need to decide on a faculty adviser and ask the adviser to agree to work with them on this experience.  During semesters when the number of capstones is high, one faculty member will agree to work with all the students on the projects.  Students then must prepare a capstone proposal which includes the executive summary, the timeline and the signed plagiarism form. The executive summary and timeline need to be approved by the faculty adviser.  After the adviser approves the materials and the packet (executive summary, timeline and signed plagiarism form) are submitted to the program director.  The program director, will submit the packet to the program faculty for review and comment and register the student for the capstone course.  The packet submission is due to the program director by the last day of the semester prior to when the capstone will be completed.  For Fall terms, the capstone packet is usually due the last Friday in July For Spring terms, the capstone packet is usually due the last Friday before examinations, usually the first or second Friday in December.  For Summer terms, the capstone packet is usually due the first Friday in May.

The pre-semester submission activities must be completed, and the capstone proposal approved before the student is registered for the capstone course.

The student will be registered for the capstone only with the approval of the Program Director. The director's approval guarantees that the student has met the program prerequisites, along with the prerequisites defined by the faculty adviser and that the capstone proposal packet is complete and submitted to the graduate program faculty for review.  The program director will assign the review team for the project after the start of the semester and notify the student and faculty adviser of the team membership.  The program director will also forward any comments from the graduate program faculty review to the adviser and student for clarification and response.

# Pre-Semester Requirements

In the semester before you plan to complete your capstone, you need to prepare the capstone proposal packet.  This activity should begin around the middle of the semester prior and it must be submitted and completed by the dates listed below.  If you do not follow these deadlines, you will not be registered for the capstone course in the following semester.  This may delay completion of your program and degree

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Suggested Date Start** | **Activity** |
| **Middle of the semester prior to the capstone course** For **fall**, this is approximately the third week of OctoberFor **spring**, this is approximately the last week of February.For **summer**, this is approximately the end of June. | If you are working on a team you need to decide who is on your team.If you are planning to work with an external organization, you need to Identify external partner and be sure that your work may be included in this capstone. You need to have the external organization sign the Release of Liability form. You need to consider the faculty member you would like to ask to work on this project as your faculty adviser.  The adviser must be a member of the program faculty.  You need to ask the faculty member if s/he would agree to work with you.  Once the faculty member agrees to work with you on your project, you need to tell the program director.You need to begin a discussion about your project with your adviser.  You need to prepare an executive summary that describes the problem you are investigating.  You need to prepare a timeline for the activities involved in your project.  You need to review the plagiarism requirements and sign the plagiarism form.  All these materials need to be reviewed and approved by the adviser prior to submission. |
| **Last day of classes in the semester *BEFORE* the capstone** |  You need to submit the capstone packet that has been reviewed and approved by the capstone faculty adviser.The packet includes your capstone proposal document, a current resume, the executive summary of capstone, timeline for your capstone activities and the signed plagiarism statement.  After the packet is submitted to the program director, it will be sent to the program faculty for review and comments. |
| **Last week of class** | The program director will register all students who have submitted the capstone proposal packet for the PROGRAM'S CAPSTONE COURSE.  The results from the faculty review will be submitted to the faculty adviser.  The faculty adviser will send the comments to you for response and if needed an update to the packet. You will begin your capstone course in the following semester. |

# Capstone Proposal Packet

1. [Capstone Proposal Form](https://lasalle.instructure.com/courses/5945/files/277153/download?wrap=1)-- This is not needed for ITM capstones (Copy of form is at the end.)

2. [Executive Summary](https://lasalle.instructure.com/courses/5945/pages/sample-executive-summaries)—For ITM we need a summary of what is the problem you are considering, why you need the training, what you are expecting to develop for your training module and how it will be delivered.

## Capstone Executive Summary and Research Resources.

You need to write an executive summary that poses your research as a specific question.  Quiet often the summary question is too general and needs to be more defined.  You might want to consider looking at some reference materials as you begin to refine your topic.  Remember for the initial packet, the executive summary should be ASKING a question, not answering it.

Here is the Library link.  The database and librarian assistance are available online

http://www.lasalle.edu/library

Additional **Guidelines** for writing an executive summary.  The first version of your summary serves as the definition of your research proposal.  I am including a link to a site for writing a research proposal.  Take a close look at how to write the proposal as a question and how to look at what you are trying to achieve.  Remember DO NOT INCLUDE your results in this first submission of the executive summary.  The results will be added AFTER you complete the project.  This site also references a literature review.  The purpose of the initial literature review is to help you narrow the focus of your proposal.  You will continue with additional research as you work on your project.

## **Research and IRB Requirements—Surveys and Interviews and External Partners**

**Are you planning to use a survey, or to interview people as part of your capstone project?  You need to have this approved before you use the survey or conduct the interviews.**

For capstone projects which include a survey, the survey instrument must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to being used.  The student(s) is (are) responsible for creating the instrument and providing the documentation needed to the IRB.  The student needs to receive IRB approval before using the survey instrument.  The approval requires approximately 3-4 weeks and this should be allocated into the capstone time line.

Visit the IRB website to see the requirements for submission.  Here is the IRB information.  It is a canvas course and you will be asked to register. <https://lasalle.instructure.com/courses/5730>

In most cases these types of instruments will be "expedited", but the determination is based on the decision of the IRB.

Are you planning to partner with an external organization?

You need to receive permission from the partner to use data and information from the partner in the proposal.  You need to explore the requirements from the organization.  If the organization requires the contents of this capstone remain confidential, then this needs to be communicated to all members involved in the capstone (the faculty adviser, the faculty review team and the program director).  This will be accommodated in the review, all presentations and all archiving of the information.

The student needs to disclose to the organization the release of liability for La Salle.

**Disclaimer about Liability, Safety and Ownership**

If the student is partnering with an external organization, then the student and that organization must come to agreement regarding liability, ownership, confidentiality and safety. For those cases in which a student is partnering with an external organization, neither La Salle University nor the student has liability to the organization regarding the student's project/research. If the project is subsidized by an external organization, then ownership is by that organization; otherwise, ownership is that of the student. The student must maintain confidentiality of the partner's data. La Salle University assumes no liability for the safety of the student while carrying out the project.

3. Capstone Timeline--For ITM capstones, the timeline is set up in the course.

Capstone Timeline Considerations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Event/Activity | Date |
| Submit capstone application packet | Last CLASS Day of semester PRIOR to capstone being completed.  Director upon acceptance of materials registers student(s) for course.  The Executive summary will be circulated to faculty for review and comments. |
| Start Research | First Day of Semester for Project. |
| Finish Initial Research Submission—Prepare Bibliography.  Remember the bibliography needs to include Peer-Reviewed Sources. | Determined in conjunction with Adviser |
| Prepare some type of “draft” for research/projectThis may be an outline, or some format decided between team and adviser.  The draft should reference research sources. | Determined in conjunction with Adviser |
| Provide a fairly complete draft for review by adviser. | Sometime near middle of semester |
| Adviser reviews and consults with studentsAdviser decides if draft is ready for a review by the faculty reviewers.  Reviewers decide themselves to read or wait until a more completed version. | Within one week of receiving draft from students |
| Adviser continues to receive draft from students.Adviser may limit number of full drafts that will be reviewed.  | Determined in conjunction with Adviser |
| Student(s) provides a “final” draft to adviser for review. | Based on WHEN student(s) expects to complete and hold presentation.  Adviser provides final decision to move project forward to reviewers. |
| Upon acceptance of “final” draft submission, adviser submits it to reviewers and asks director to schedule presentation. | Reviewers need 2 weeks to review document.  During this period, reviewers’ questions may put a hold on the presentation if there are many major issues or questions. |
| Reviewers submit comments | Student(s) receives comments |
| Director schedules presentation. | Presentation may be scheduled for the end of the review process. |
| Presentation is held | Presentation and final comments are completed. |
| Student(s) meets with adviser to finalize draft | Student(s) needs about one week to make final changes. |
| Student(s) submit draft to adviser for COMPLETE/FINAL approval | Adviser needs a max of one week to approve final submission. |
| After receiving adviser approval, student(s) submit a final electronic copy to Director for inclusion in library files.  Student submits permission form directing HOW document may be archived. | Student(s) needs to prepare electronic copy and sends to director. |
| Director submits final grade for capstone as assigned by adviser | Upon receipt of electronic copy, director submits grade from AdviserIf student intends to complete program during this semester, all these steps need to be completed by end of semester date for final grade submission.  This is approximately December 14 for Fall Semesters, About May 13 for Spring Semesters and about August 17 for summer semesters.  Students should use the last day of scheduled final examinations when planning the timeline for the project.  If students do not meet this date for the final grade, the capstone cannot be completed. |

Student(s) and adviser need to include a plan for meeting/conferencing during the timeline.  This is not included in the outline above but needs to be addressed in conjunction with the plans for successful completion.  If the project is a team initiative, the entire team is expected to participate fully and equally in preparing, researching, writing, reviewing and presenting the capstone.  Open communication between the student(s) and the adviser are critical to successful completion of the project.  If during the research there is a change in the original direction, the adviser should be consulted immediately about the change.

Students need to be aware that semester ends have additional requirements for faculty grading and responsibilities. It is imperative that students adhere to the hard dates for end of semesters.  Faculty need time to review a project thoroughly.  The timeline cannot be squeezed tighter due to other circumstances.  If there is an emergency, then is this when the student should consider a request for petitioning for an Incomplete from the adviser.

4.  Resume

An updated current resume must be supplied with your packet.

5. [Signed Plagiarism form](https://lasalle.instructure.com/courses/5945/files/277155/download?wrap=1)

 Plagiarism Module

You need to understand what constitutes plagiarism.  You need to review the following articles.  If you have any questions, please address your question to your adviser or the program director.  Plagiarism incidents in the capstone are grounds for dismissal from the program.  You are at the end of your studies.  Please be very careful as you complete your research and prepare your documents and presentations.

**Citing Sources and Plagiarism**

Of its very nature, a research paper or project builds on the thoughts and work of others. It is appropriate to use this work but only with proper attribution to its source.

The MLA Handbook states "Forms of plagiarism include the failure to give appropriate acknowledgment:

while repeating another's wording or particularly apt phrase,

when presenting another person's line of thinking” (30).

Do NOT cite common knowledge.

DO cite information and ideas that are not yours — whether quoted directly or paraphrased. A rule of thumb for citations is: if you are using more than 6 words in a row from a source, cite the source. The MLA Handbook states "you must indicate the source of any appropriated material that readers might otherwise mistake for your own. If you have any doubt about whether you are committing plagiarism, cite your source or sources” (33). It is NOT true that only direct quotations need to be cited. Paraphrases of information and ideas that you are "borrowing" must also be cited.

If several consecutive sentences in your paper paraphrase information from or the ideas in a single source, you can cite the source at the end of your last sentence on this material. However, this does NOT mean you can construct your paper essentially by copying and pasting from documents on the web, paragraph by paragraph, even if you cite the source at the end of each paragraph in your paper and even if you do some minor rewording. This is plagiarism. Such a paper is essentially the work of others, and not your work. (The only appropriate way to copy a large amount of material into your paper is to indent it — which implies a direct quote — and cite the source at the end. Long direct quotes should be very few in number, and you should have a good reason for using a long direct quote.)

Cite or document a source within the text by giving a reader only enough information to find the source in the bibliography or works cited list. The most common citation contains only the last name of the author and the page number, e.g., (Kahn 43). If the author's name appears within the text of the paragraph, only the page number is needed. All citations are placed in parentheses. This is an easier alternative than footnotes.

Links to Documents Describing Plagiarism:

Go to the La Salle Library web page summary of plagiarism found at [.](http://www.lasalle.edu/library/plagiarism.htm). Another fine source is Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It ([http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html .](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html%C2%A0.) from Indiana University. This document includes good examples of paraphrasing a source (which should be used instead of direct quotation in most cases) and citing it correctly, as well as examples of plagiarism.

After reading these articles, please review the plagiarism document, sign it and submit it with your capstone proposal packet.  If during your preparation, you are not sure about the content of your document, you may submit it to current tool the University is using to check similarity.

# General Responsibilities--Student, Adviser, Review Team and Program Director

## **Student Responsibilities**

**1. Pre-Semester Submission**

Students are expected to complete the pre-semester requirements prior to requesting registration for a capstone course. The student is responsible for requesting a faculty member to join him/her in the research project. The student will work with the faculty adviser to define the scope of the project, including all deliverable pieces, and the detailed timeline.

**2. Capstone Proposal**

The student is responsible for completing the capstone proposal packet, having it reviewed by the faculty adviser and submitting it to the program director based on the pre-semester requirements timeline. Failure to complete the proposal within the timeline may result in the proposal not being approved and the student not being permitted to register for the capstone course.

**3. Project Submissions**

The student is responsible for adhering to the timeline established in the established in the proposal. Late submission of project documentation which requires review by the faculty advisor and/or the capstone reviewers will result in changes to the original timeline. The reviewing team expects a submission of the project at the mid-semester time and at least two weeks prior to the date of the project presentation. Late submissions may result in a grade of incomplete (I) until the project has been reviewed and all pieces completed and submitted.

## **Faculty Adviser**

The capstone proposal packet is reviewed with faculty adviser.  The adviser reviews all drafts before they are sent to the review team.  The faculty adviser guides the student in preparing the capstone project, but the final responsibility lies with the student.  The faculty adviser is expected to respond in a timely manner to questions from the student and also to review drafts within a two-week timeframe.  The faculty adviser communicates messages from the faculty review team to the student.  The faculty adviser decides on the weight of the capstone components (Project submission, presentation and student communication/participation).

Faculty advisers may request additional requirements to the capstone project.  The student will be advised of these additional requirements during the pre-semester review process.  The faculty adviser may set a maximum limit for the number of drafts that will be reviewed.  The faculty adviser is not the proofreader for the project.  The role of the adviser is to guide the research and provide general comments on missing content and project direction.

The faculty adviser may suggest and approve a change in the capstone project topic and/or direction, based on the student research.  The faculty adviser should alert the program director to these changes which may be communicated to the faculty review team.

The faculty adviser will decide on the final grade/assessment for the capstone and communicate that to the student.

## **Faculty Review Team**

Each capstone will be reviewed by a team of at least two program faculty members.  The faculty review team will be determined by the Program Director and communicated to the faculty adviser and student(s). The faculty review team is asked to review and provide comments on the final draft and attend the final presentation.  The faculty review team comments and concerns will be communicated to the faculty adviser and the program director.  The faculty adviser will communicate these comments to the student.  The faculty review team may stop a presentation from being scheduled if the review determines the capstone requires additional content or major revisions.  The faculty review team will be given two weeks to review submissions.  If the reviews are successfully completed in a shorter time frame, the presentation may be scheduled earlier.  It is recommended that the two week time period for the review be allocated in planning the capstone project timeline.

The faculty review team may request review of interim documents during the capstone experience.  Commenting on interim documents is at the discretion of the reviewer.

## **Program Director**

The program director is responsible for submitting the capstone project proposal to the program faculty for review and comments.  The comments from this review will be communicated to the faculty adviser.  The program director will register the student for the capstone course if the capstone project proposal is submitted on time.  The program director will appoint the members of the faculty review team for the capstone.  The program director will schedule the capstone project presentation based on schedules of all parties.  The program students and faculty will be invited to attend the presentation.

After the presentation is completed and the final version of the project is reviewed and approved by the faculty adviser, the program director posts the final grade from the faculty adviser for the capstone.  The program director will post the capstone project to the archive based on the student determined choice on how the project may be available publicly.

 Capstone Adviser Expectations

In some semesters, one faculty member will be responsible for all capstones during the semester. In other semesters, the student will ask a faculty member to work with the student as an advisor. A faculty member agrees to participate in a capstone experience with a student in an advisor capacity.

 The role of the advisor for the capstone is based on the agreement between you and the student.  The capstone is meant to be an independent research experience for the student on a topic of the student’s choice.

 Your role in this research experience is more support.  You are asked to

 Review student references to be sure there is an adequate mix of acceptable peer-reviewed sources;

* Guide the student on the scope of the project and intervene if the project is too broad;
* Review the student’s submissions to be sure the submissions are coherent and address specific issues raised in faculty comments.
* Provide adequate feedback on submissions.

You are **not** expected

* To provide an outline for the paper, however in some cases your input would certainly produce a more coherent project;
* Be the proof-reader for this paper.

 If the student is having major issues with grammar, or sentence structure.  you might want to consider pointing out specific issues, but it is the student’s responsibility to resolve these issues.  (The student may make appointments with the writing center and there is a reference for how to write a research paper in the capstone course.)

**Things to consider**

As an advisor, you may wish to limit on the number of reviews you will read for the capstone.  The minimum should be 2.  If you agree to review each updated, you may find small changes and the student expecting you to review too much too often.  There should be at least a midpoint submission and a final submission.

**Guidance for Communication**

The student is expected to check-in with you on progress for the capstone.  You and the student will decide on the best strategy to communicate, but it is the student’s responsibility to adhere to this agreed schedule.  The student submits the timeline with your agreement, so failure to adhere to the timeline is the student’s responsibility.  Of course, the timeline may be changed, based on circumstances, but you should be involved in that discussion and agree with the changes.  It is not your responsibility to keep the student on task.

**Final Submission**

When you believe the final submission is ready for the faculty review team, you are asked to let the director know.  The student will be asked for this version and the director will send it to the review team and the presentation will be scheduled.  Comments from the review team will be sent to you and the student.  It is possible the review team will state the project is not ready for review and then it will be sent back to the student for additional work.

If you find you are having difficulty making a point on the capstone and you may wish to ask the faculty review team to see this and make comments.  Sometimes comments from additional reviewers will help make the changes needed to improve the capstone.

**Presentation and Guidelines**

Once the final submission is sent to the review team, the presentation will be scheduled.  As long as the review team does not have any major issues with the capstone content, the presentation will be held.  If the review team has major issues/concerns, the presentation may be rescheduled until these issues/concerns are addressed.

Students will be asked to present an overview of the project.  The total time for this presentation is one hour. The overview including conclusions should be about 45 minutes and this will allow about 15 minutes for questions.  During presentation, time will be monitored and if the student goes over the time they will be stopped.

The student is told these guidelines when the presentation is scheduled and you are asked to alert them again to these time constraints.  Students should have you review the presentation and students should be encouraged to practice.  Many students are reading the paper and this is not acceptable.  We are in the process of preparing a self-paced course on how to complete a formal presentation.

**Completion of Presentation and Final Submissions**

At the conclusion of the presentation, the student will be required to update the final capstone document based on the review team and presentation comments.  You will be asked to verify that the comments are addressed in the final capstone document.  The student will be sent the publication form by the director.  This form will provide the student decision on how the capstone may be made visible in the University Digital Commons (electronic database) area.  Once the update to the capstone is completed, the student will be asked to submit the final version to the director and you will be asked to provide the student with the grade assessment for the capstone experience.

In some cases, the capstones do not finish in the one semester and are extended into the 2nd semester without financial obligation.  However, if the capstone does not finish by the end of the 2nd semester, the student’s grade of Incomplete will remain on the transcript and the student will be expected to do another capstone and pay for it again.

**Timeline concerns for Capstones**

You and the faculty reviewers have additional responsibilities as the end of the semester approaches.  It is expected that each review should have at least a week before comments will be submitted from the adviser and two weeks for the review team.  However, the review time is usually quicker than that depending on the semester and submission time.  The most difficult time is end of spring because of the quick turnaround for graduation and also the need to get started for summer.

# What happens when I finish?

At the end of the capstone presentation, you will be asked to make any final updates and submit it to your adviser for final approval.  At that time, you will also be asked to complete the paper that tells La Salle how they may publish your paper.  This is a form that you need to complete and return via email to the Program Director.

# How is the Capstone Grade Assessed?

All capstones except ITM are assessed on three major components, the capstone paper, the capstone presentation and the capstone timeline/communication.  The weights are

* Paper (50%)
* Presentation (25%)
* Timeline and Communication (25%).

Advisers will seek objective review from the review team in assessing the final pieces of the paper and presentation.  The following rubrics are samples that are used in the assessment.

The following rubrics are samples that are used to review the capstone projects.  The faculty adviser may change/modify the rubrics.

# The Library--How to Conduct Research

Your capstone is going to require peer-reviewed sources as part of the paper.  Your best source for these is the La Salle Library.  The library is available in distance via synchronous sessions or phone.  The research librarians are there to help you with your topics.  Consider using the resources that are available for your capstone.

# General Outline of Contents for a Capstone Paper

## General Outline for Capstone Paper

1. Update of original executive summary which states a high-level view of the problem and a summary of the results
2. Statement of the problem—Thesis should be clear.
3. Review of literature regarding the problem.
4. Connection between problem and literature review
5. Plans and methodology used in research for specific area including analysis and synthesis of literature review relating specific details of findings to the problem
6. Details about methodology and conducting of the research
7. Results of the research and recommendations based on specifics for the problem
8. Suggestions for continuing and/or expanding areas for this problem/research
9. Lessons learned from this capstone
10. Bibliography

You may be using a case study approve based on personal experience.  You need to tie that into the results of the research analysis.

Remember, this is just a suggestion.  It provides a guide to how to consider putting your results together.

## Why do I need an outline?

The outline provides a framework for your paper, but how do you get started?

* Start with your thesis
* Do you need a brief introduction and don’t include so much about what is familiar.
* Start to look at your major points from the research. Each point should be major part.
* What evidence do you have to support your point? Do the points flow from one to the other? How can you make them flow?
* Do you have a specific case or set of similar cases you are using to make your argument?
* Should you explain your points and support with the case? Does it read better with the case broken in several different pieces….
* What is the major point of this work? At the end summarize...

#### **NOW COMES THE HARD PART.....Start to Write.**

## Resources for Writing a Graduate Research Paper

If your capstone submissions include too many updates at the beginning, your advisor will return it to you for your review.  Consider contacting the writing center.  They are available via in-person, phone and synchronous sessions for help.  You can visit the student support services for help from the writing center.

http://wp.lasalle.edu/learningsupport/sheekey-writing-center/

M.S. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Capstone Proposal Form

Semester Capstone will be completed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date of Capstone Packet Submission \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| ID |  |
| Telephone: |  |
| Work Phone |  |
| Email Address |  |
| Courses Completed |  |
|  |
| Team Information (if appropriate) |
| Team Member and Email |  |
|  |  |
| Capstone Topic Information  |
|  |
|  |  |
| Faculty Adviser and Email |  |
|  |  |
| External Partner (if appropriate) |  |
| Partner Company |  |
| Partner Address |  |
| Partner Telephone |  |
| Partner Email |  |
|  |  |
| Student Signature and Date |  |
|  |  |

