

# Understanding the Capstone Project

The capstone project is the endpoint of the HDO program. It has two purposes:

- To **demonstrate** what you've learned through the program to faculty, fellow students, and others.
- To **apply** what you've learned to a real-life problem involving the human dimensions of an organization.

In this document, we discuss capstone guidelines, the team that will support you throughout your capstone project, and major capstone milestones.

## Capstone guidelines

You will begin thinking about the capstone project during your first week in the HDO program. As you continue through the coursework, you will develop aspects of the capstone project in consultation with your capstone mentor (see below).

The capstone project should have these characteristics:

- It should be grounded in a specific organization—preferably, but not necessarily, your own. (If you have trouble finding a problem, HDO can provide links to organizations that you can approach.)
- It should address an actual problem in the organization, a problem that has human dimensions and that has not been adequately addressed.
- Since addressing the problem will involve independent research, you should be able to gain the organization's permission to do this research. If the organization is concerned about confidentiality, discuss these challenges with your mentor.
- It should represent effort equivalent to the 90 dedicated hours of the capstone semester plus a substantial portion of earlier semesters.

The capstone project should result in two components:

- A **project deliverable**. The project deliverable should thoroughly demonstrate what you've learned and apply it to the problem in your organization. Depending on your organization, situation, and problem, the project deliverable can be a document (such as a research paper, business proposal, prospectus, or organizational consultant recommendation report), a multimedia project, or some other deliverable. If your project deliverable involves sensitive organizational information, you may develop two versions for public and private consumption; your mentor and reader can sign a nondisclosure agreement if necessary.
- A **presentation**. The presentation should summarize your project deliverable for an audience that includes HDO faculty, students, and members of the public. In this 30-minute presentation, you should cover the problem to be solved, the methodology you used to solve it, the results, and implications. The presentation must have an oral component and may have a visual component (such as a slide deck, video, or multimedia display).

## Capstone team

As you work on the capstone project, you will be supported by two team members:

**Capstone mentor.** At the beginning of your coursework, the HDO Graduate Advisor and Assistant Graduate Advisor will assign you a capstone mentor, based on your interests and the characteristics of your proposed capstone program. (You may approach another mentor if you find someone better suited to your project.)

The capstone mentor will work with you throughout your coursework, supervising you as you plan and develop your capstone project. The mentor will also lead the evaluation of your capstone deliverable and presentation.

The capstone mentor must be HDO-affiliated faculty.

**Second reader.** By the end of your second semester, you will approach a second reader to provide specialized guidance and feedback on your project. Although you might approach an HDO faculty mentor for this role, you can also approach other UT faculty or people with specialized knowledge of your capstone problem. Your mentor must approve your second reader.

You may invite your capstone mentor and second reader (or prospective second readers) to class events, such as your internal capstone project presentation in HDO 381 (spring) and your external capstone project presentation in HDO 386 (summer).

## Capstone milestones

*(Dates are approximate; consult the HDO Calendar for specific due dates.)*

### First Intensive Week (Fall): Introducing the capstone.

During the week, the HDO Graduate Advisor and Assistant Graduate Advisor will host a casual capstone discussion hour. This discussion will include the following:

- a 10-minute exercise in which students write initial ideas about capstone goals and methodology plans;
- a group discussion of capstone possibilities;
- initial guidance on how to select and scope a capstone project; and
- a timeline for the entire capstone project.

### September 1: Assigning mentors.

Two weeks after the first Intensive Week, the HDO Graduate Advisor and Assistant Graduate Advisor will assign a provisional mentor to each student, based on the student's interests and capstone project.

### October 1: Meeting mentors.

Prior to the start of October (in the first semester), each student must meet one-on-one with the assigned provisional mentor within the Core teaching faculty. If a better fit arises as the project comes together, this assignment may change.

**November 1: Turning in a title and basic plan.**

By November 1, students must turn in a title and plan to their mentors. This research plan may be as simple as "I plan to read these books," "I plan to interview these persons," etc. Mentors will provide written feedback within two weeks.

**December 1 (End of Fall Semester): Turning in a detailed schedule.**

By the end of the fall semester, each student must provide a detailed schedule of planned research to the mentor.

**February 15 and March 15: Turning in capstone project progress reports.**

As part of their work in HDO 381 (Individual Perspectives on the Human Dimensions of Organizations), students will turn in two progress reports describing their progress on the internal capstone proposal (see below).

**May 1 (End of the Spring Semester): Turning in an internal capstone proposal.**

As part of their work in HDO 381, students will turn in an internal capstone proposal—meant for their HDO faculty mentor—that does the following:

1. introduce and motivate the topic chosen for the Capstone
2. discuss human, cultural, and strategic perspectives on the problem
3. describe empirical and analytic methods to be used, and present any initial data analysis
4. discuss the hurdles faced in implementing change, and possible ways of evaluating success of any proposed solutions.

**May 1 (End of the Spring Semester): Selecting a second reader.**

Based on their internal capstone proposal, students will select a second reader to help guide and evaluate the capstone project.

**August 1 (End of Summer Semester): Turning in an external capstone proposal.**

As part of their work in HDO 386, students will turn in an external capstone proposal—meant for their own organization—that synthesizes the work they have done across all semesters, describing the situation that requires a project, the objectives they will achieve via the project, the methods they plan to use, their qualifications for performing them, and the benefits that will flow to the organization from completing the capstone project.

**December 1: Turning in and presenting the final capstone project.**

At the end of the capstone project, students will do the following:

- Turn the project in to their faculty mentor and second reader.
- Present a public version of the project to interested faculty, students, and others.

# Capstone Checklist

*The following is simply a guideline. Discuss and confirm due dates with your Faculty Mentor.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Meet Mentor (assigned by Graduate Advisors): By October 1**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Title and Basic Plan: November 1**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Detailed Capstone Schedule: December 1 (End of Fall Semester)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Two Progress Reports: February 15 and March 15**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Internal Capstone Proposal: May 1 (End of Spring Semester)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Select Second Reader: May 1 (End of Spring Semester)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **External Capstone Proposal: August 1 (End of Summer Semester)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Final Capstone Project and Presentation: December 1**