

HDO Capstone Project

Overview

Topic/Subject Matter

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 to focus on, 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 advisor(s).
- It should represent effort equivalent to the 90 dedicated hours of the capstone semester plus a substantial portion of earlier semesters.

Deliverables*

The capstone project should result in two components:

- **A project.** The project deliverable should thoroughly demonstrate what you've learned and apply it to a problem in an organization. Depending on the organization, situation, and problem, the project may be (1) a substantial document (such as a research paper, business proposal, prospectus, or organizational consultant recommendation report) or (2) a shorter written document alongside a substantive non-written project (e.g., a film, app, website). Your written document should be academically oriented.
- **A presentation.** During your graduation weekend, you will present your capstone to the general public by way of a poster session. This means you must transform your capstone into a poster and prepare a brief effective oral overview of your project (an elevator speech). There is a poster template available on the HDO website on the Student Resources page. Your poster should offer a succinct overview of the problem addressed in the Capstone; the methodology you used to examine that problem; the results of your research and work; and the implications for future research and progress in addressing the problem.

** 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.*

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.



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Guidelines

Required Content & Formatting*

Length

- Written Document + Substantive Non-Written Material (e.g., film, app, website): 15-page minimum

-or-

- Written Document Alone: 30- to 40-pages

Content

All Capstone Papers must include the following (more sections can be added as needed):

1. Title
2. Introduction/Overview
3. Problem
4. Background (on the organization being analyzed)
5. Approach (to the problem)
6. Results
7. Bibliography

Note on Citation and Bibliography:

- Citation style should be consistent throughout. HDO's default is the Chicago Style, but please check with your advisor to see what they prefer/suggest.
- The written portion of your Capstone should be academically oriented. In terms of your bibliography, this means you should discuss and cite 5 to 6 academic sources in depth and at least 10 additional academic sources as support and reference.

Formatting

- Standard Font (12-point Times or Arial)
- Standard Margins (the default on Microsoft Word is 1.25" on the left/right and 1" on the top/bottom)
- Standard pagination (title page, table of contents, signature page, images, figures, etc., should not be included in final page count)

** If a student feels her/his report will deviate from these guidelines, they should consult with their advisor.*

Advising

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

Capstone Advisor: At the beginning of your coursework, the HDO Graduate Advisor and Assistant Graduate Advisor will assign you a faculty advisor, 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 may also approach other UT faculty or people with specialized knowledge of your capstone problem. Your mentor must approve your second reader and you should inform the associate director of your choices by the end of the spring semester.

Please invite your capstone advisor and second reader (or prospective second readers) to important class events, such as your internal capstone project presentation in HDO 380 or 381 (spring) and your external capstone project presentation in HDO 386 (summer).

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Timeline

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).

(Dates are approximate; we will communicate specific dates through the student listserv.)

Semester 1 (Fall)

Intensive Week: 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 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: Assigning Faculty Advisors

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

October: Meeting Faculty Advisors

By October, each student must meet one-on-one with the assigned advisor within the Core teaching faculty. If a better fit arises as the project comes together, this assignment may change.

November: Title & Basic Plan

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

December: Detailed Schedule

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

Semester 2 (Spring)

March: Progress Report

Each student should meet with their advisor and/or send them a detailed report to update them on the progress they have made on their project so far.

May: Internal Capstone Proposal

As part of their work in the spring core class, students will turn in an internal capstone proposal—meant for their HDO faculty advisor—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.
5. List 5 academic texts that address a similar problem.

May: Selecting a Second Reader

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

May: Institutional Review Board

Present (1) Institutional Review Board (IRB) Training Certificate and (2) Draft of IRB proposal to your advisor.

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Semester 3 (Summer)

June: Formally Submit IRB Proposal

August: External Capstone Presentation

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.

Semester 4 (Fall)

November: Final Draft

Copies of final Capstone Projects (written and otherwise) should be submitted to the student's advisors.

December: Official Submission

Once your advisors have read and approved your final draft, obtain the signatures of both advisors showing approval for the final Capstone Project. The original— along with a copy of the final version of your capstone— should be given to Amy (a.ware@austin.utexas.edu) by December 1. Failure to complete and submit this document on time may delay a student's graduation. The written portion of the capstone should be submitted as a .pdf.

December: Public Presentation & Graduation

In early December, you will be presenting your capstones to the general public as part of your graduation requirements.

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Checklist

The following is simply a guideline detailing *your responsibilities* during the Capstone Project process. Discuss and confirm due dates with your faculty advisor.

_____ **Meet Advisor** (assigned by Graduate Advisors): October 1

_____ **Title and Basic Plan:** November 1

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

_____ **One Progress Report (oral or written):** March 15

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

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

_____ **Present IRB Certificate & Proposal to Advisor:** May 1 (End of Spring Semester)

_____ **Formally Submit IRB Proposal:** June 1 (Beginning of Summer Semester)

_____ **External Capstone Presentation:** August 1 (End of Summer Semester)

_____ **Final Capstone Project and Presentation:** December 1