Capstone Standard

School of Professional Studies

Understanding the Capstone Experience

The Capstone project is intended to be a culminating experience calling upon your ability to analyze an organization's issues and apply the competencies you developed through your course work in your Master Program (Master of Science in Professional Communication (MSPC); Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT) or Master of Public Administration (MPA). The project deliverable is a demonstration of your professional competencies and evidence of your foundation of theoretical knowledge applied to "real-world" issues. Through the process of close collaboration with an external client/internal client you will probe and address issues within an organization using your analytical, research, writing, and other professional skills you acquired during your course of study.

At the close of the semester, you and along with your team members are expected to write and present a well-researched, insightful, creative report that clarifies your strategic considerations leading to positive outcomes for your client. Your report details the story of the original research, the proposed strategy and implementation plan, timelines, and budget necessary to meet the client's communication goal. It is highly recommended you have completed all or nearly all of the required coursework in your Master program so you can apply and substantiate what you have learned throughout the program. In addressing an organization's issues and preparing the Capstone report, students are asked to draw on a wide variety of techniques, procedures and knowledge they have developed as scholars of at the graduate level, such as:

- Execution of a communication audit
- Definition of the issue and the associated systems, procedures and resources.
- An analysis of the company's online presence
- An analysis of the relevant systems and processes
- Demonstrated knowledge of budgetary processes
- Command of evaluative techniques for policy analysis
- Ability to perform situational analysis
- Ability to identify organizational implementation issues
- Articulate what comprises the organization's system
- Develop an action plan addressing an organizational issue/problem
- Articulate the costs and benefits of a proposed solution

Defining a Capstone

Some people confuse a capstone with a thesis. Generally, a thesis is written for an academic audience and is regarded as a contribution to an academic field of study. A capstone project is an investigative effort that culminates in a final project deliverable and presentation. The project is aimed at least two audiences:

- The client (organization) who has established a particular need
- The Master Program faculty advisor who evaluates the report accompanying the deliverable to the client.

This process builds a connection between the academic components of the Master Program (MSPC, MSIT or MPA) and the application of knowledge to a "real-world" context.

Your Capstone requires completion of a project where the final product is a potential deliverable for a workplace audience accompanied by an extensive report. Examples of a deliverable include:

- A set of public relations materials and a schedule of implementation,
- A training manual, a comprehensive communication audit of an organization,
- A social media presence audit,
- A marketing plan and schedule, or a usability assessment.
- An assessment/analysis of an enterprise wide IT system or application

Your overall report documents how the deliverables reflects scholarly concepts supporting the project team's decision made in designing the plans for the client.

Roles and Expectations

You work as a member of a team and your teamwork abilities are critical to the success of your Capstone project. This is your project and you are responsible for all aspects of the project. However, the scope of your Capstone is extensive and it is highly recommended a team member acts as the project manager for the Capstone. As a project team, you need to establish a schedule of important meetings and deadlines to ensure the project goes smoothly.

You will work with a Capstone Advisor for guidance. The Capstone Advisor has the authority to determine if your project is appropriate and can reject or approve your proposal and ask for revisions. The Capstone Advisor is your mentor throughout the project and should guide you through the process of writing and

presenting your project. You must meet with the Capstone Advisor at least once per month (or as often as your Capstone Advisor deems appropriate). It is mandatory that all team members attend these advisory meetings.

All students must be present on site for the final presentation. No remote participation is allowed.

Measures of Success

Because teamwork is the cornerstone of the Capstone project, you will be required to complete two (2) self-evaluations of your contributions as a team member throughout the semester. In addition, your team members will complete two evaluations of your participation during the semester. Listed below are the assessment standards and definition of teamwork:

Teamwork

The Capstone experience is ideal for developing excellent team work skills. It is an opportunity to learn how to work in team based environment. Teamwork is often a crucial part of any business initiative, as it is often necessary for colleagues to work well together, trying their best in any circumstance. Teamwork means that people willingly cooperate, using their unique skills and providing constructive feedback, despite any personal conflict between individuals.

Why is team work important? Working as a team is a synergistic way of working where the sum is greater than the parts. Good team work maximizes individual strengths and brings out the best in each team member. These unique individual strengths are then complimented by other team members. A good team member demonstrates the following behavior:

- Responds and relates well to people in all positions
- Viewed by others as a team player, and is cooperative
- Looks for common ground, and solves problems for the good of all
- Proactively takes action and is a contributing participant

Students will be advised during the Capstone course to complete the peer evaluation.   Participation in the peer evaluation is a component for the final grade.

The Capstone report, presentation, and deliverables are evaluated when completed. However, because teamwork and analytic and problem solving skills are evaluated individually it does not mean that all team members earn the same grade for the course.

A successful Capstone project is marked by high levels of interest, interaction, and buy-in between students and their Capstone Advisor. Inadequate Capstone projects result when there is lack of buy-in or interest from students. The best strategy for a successful Capstone project is to communicate and meet frequently you're your Capstone Advisor!

Choosing a Capstone Project

The Capstone Advisors have a list of project requests from external clients. The advisor vet each potential client to ensure the Capstone project can be done in 12 weeks and that the client is committed to the project. These requests will be assigned first to Capstone teams. In the event, there are no outside requests, the Capstone Advisor will help you identify potential research topics or encourage students to connect with local organizations to find a project.

Potential Capstone Deliverables

The Capstone Project deliverable can be any of the following:

- Enterprise wide case study
- Business plan including ROI (return on investment)
- Communication or marketing campaign
- Feasibility Study
- Project plan for addressing an organizational problem
- Investigate an area of interest related to a degree program

    o Communicating through crisis and change management
    o Organizational communication policy and strategy Corporate governance, policy, and practice
    o Corporate social responsibility and ethics
    o Cross cultural communication
    o Image, identity, and reputation management Integrated advertising and marketing Internal communication
    o Social media and Internet/intranet practices
    o Issues management
    o Old and new media relations
    o Performance measures for organizational success

- o Strategic public relations
- o Business Intelligence systems
- o System Analysis
- o Internet optimization techniques
- o E-Commerce
- o Cybersecurity

Examples of Past Capstone Projects

- Marketing Plan and Strategy for Nested Bean an infant product
- Adult Family Care Marketing Plan for a human service provider
- Analysis of Community Event that is an annual fundraiser
- Social Media Marketing Plan for a local not for profit
- Marketing Plan for an area Preschool
- Analysis to Increase readership for a Weekly Newspaper
- The Research and Analysis of Mental Health of Worcester College Students
- Lighthouse Academics Contacts List Database Project Documentation
- Research and Comparison for Database Security in Healthcare Industry
- Solutions for Electronic Medical Record Security
- Engineering and Construction IT Data Management System
- Corporate Inventory System (IT)
- Data Center - Cost Model Analysis for Planning and Operations
- Feasibility Study for Municipal Professional Development Certificate Program
- Investigation of the International Student Experience at Clark
- Research on the Opioid Crisis
- IT professional career ladder for HR department
- Program ISO 9001 process documentation for a Clark organization
- Determining the best legal structure for a startup renewal energy cooperative

Capstone Process

The Capstone project begins by team selection. Your Capstone advisor will assign you to a team. Your team will consist of persons with specific skills so that each is able to make a recognizable contribution to the project. For example: some people are good writers, others good with methodology, and others good with project management, and others are good with library research.

While compatibility is important, but working with your friends as team members may not be the wisest decision if they do not complement your skills. Diversity in skills and backgrounds in team membership ensures a more successful project.

In building your team it is most useful to decide from the start who will be responsible for which items. Outlining at the start of the project roles and assignments with due dates is a good practice. As mentioned in the Roles and Responsibility section, a person with good project management skills is an important part of the project.

Selecting a Topic

Your Capstone Advisor has projects available for team assignment. These projects have been vetted by the advisor prior to your Capstone semester. Your advisor will provide background on the client's organization and their organizational problem, issue or opportunity. The exact final deliverables will depend on your client's project requirements which will be discussed during your first meeting with your client.

Before the First Meeting with the Client

It is important to prepare for your first meeting with the client. This meeting should be done <u>no later than the third week of the semester and preferably sooner.</u> Your team needs to work together to be able to do the following:

1. Define the objectives for the Capstone with your team and be able to communicate this to your client
2. Search the social media, library and internet etc. on the organization prior to the meeting and record your impressions, and any relevant facts and issues that may inform your conversation with the client.
3. Find the client's mission, vision, core values on web sites or printed material and be able to articulate for the client.

4. Start looking for new trends relevant to the industry. Be prepared for your first client meeting and be able to give a brief overview of what you have found.
5. Try to understand how the organization fits into a larger system and describe this in the report.

You are required to submit a 2-3-page report to the Capstone Advisor before you meet with the client. This will be a graded assignment. The remaining assignments will be discussed in the next chapter.

Project Proposal

Prior to beginning the Capstone, you will need to complete a project charter and submit the document to the Capstone Advisor. This is a mandatory step in the process. <u>This must be submitted</u> <u>no later than the fourth week of the semester.</u>

Capstone Project Charter

The form is available on the Capstone Moodle Site. There is also a companion document that explains each of the sections in the Project Charter. Completing this document is a grade requirement. For more details see Chapter 3 Assignments.

Sections to Complete for the Final Report

The completed report includes several key sections and is approximately 75-125 pages in length (including supplemental materials). Details on what is required in the Final Report are covered in Chapter 4 – Final Report.

Final Presentation: Defense

Your group is required to make a formal presentation referred to as a Defense. A defense is a term that simply denotes a discussion of your capstone before the Capstone Advisor and possibly others from your program. All team members must be present and participate in the defense. You will not receive a passing grade for the course if you do not attend the defense and participate in the presentation. For many this is the final step in the evaluation of your work in the program, and the tradition of "defending" your Capstone serves as a rite of passage from student to a professional.

The Defense should include a power point or some other visual presentation that discusses the main points of the Capstone project. All Defense presentations must be scheduled before the last day of instruction during the

semester. All Capstone students must be present on site for their final presentation.

The presentation should be at a minimum 20 minutes in length but no more than 45 minutes. Be sure to leave at least 15 minutes for questions. The client should be invited and you are encouraged invite colleagues, family, and friends to the presentation. For more details, refer to Chapter 3 Assignments.

Deliverables

You are to provide the Capstone Advisor with a comprehensive report in both hard copy and electronically. The client receives a copy of the report as well as deliverables that your team promised. **Your final grades will not be given until both the hard and electronic copy have been submitted to your advisor.**

Your report should be either bound or placed neatly into a three-ring binder. This is a major piece of work and should be presented as such.

Human Subject Research Approval

If you choose to use human subjects for your capstone, you must get proper approval. If you propose to engage in research activities (interviews, surveys, etc.) involving the use of human subjects, you must have approval prior to the initiation of the project from the Clark University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of persons participating in research projects. The point of contact for IRB matters is Diane Sainsbury, Assistant in the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research, at x3880.

Please visit the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research web page for a complete description of the IRB process and checklists. You can find the page at this URL: http://www.clarku.edu/offices/research/compliance/humsubj/

It is strongly recommended all student complete the online National Institute of Health training on human research. This is a free training program and upon successful completion the Institute will certify your completion of the program.

Your completed approval request form to the IRB should be attached as an appendix to your project (make a copy).

Researching Your Topic

A vital component to your Capstone project is the research you can gather on your topic. By now you should know how to use research questions to narrow the scope of the project. However, at the same time your team should develop a solid base of knowledge about the industry and the issue you are addressing. You can use the following sources:

- The Clark library in person or online
- Your Program professors
- Online sources such as Google Scholar or online periodicals
- Books in the field of communication or relevant disciplines
- Primary research such as interviews, surveys, and observations.

Assignments

While the Capstone course is unlike other courses in terms of meetings there are several major pieces of work that must be completed in a timely fashion. This section will identify those assignments and provide a timeline.

Assignment 1 - Prior to First Meeting with the Client

This assignment mentioned in Chapter 1 and it is the brief report prior to meeting with the client. The report should be approximately 2-3 pages and it will help to prepare your team for the first meeting. The report should include the following information:

1. Define objectives for this capstone with your team members
2. Search for the organization on social media and other sources and record your impression.
3. Identify the mission, vision, and core values
4. Start looking for new trends relevant to the industry. Don't go to the meeting unprepared. Give a brief overview of what you have found.
5. Try to understand how the organization fits into a larger system and describe this in the report

This assignment is due no later than the 3rd week of the semester and is 5% of the final grade

Assignment 2 - Project Charter

Prior to beginning the capstone, you will need to complete a project charter (found on Moodle) to the Capstone Advisor. This is a mandatory step in the process. *This must be submitted no later than the fourth week of the semester and is 10% of the final grade.*

The Project Charter addresses the following:
1. Importance of the project including the background of the problem to be addressed.
2. Opportunity Statement: What is the pain the Capstone will relieve for the client?
3. Goal: What is the Capstone to accomplish
4. Scope: What is in Scope and what is out of scope?
5. Constraints: What will hinder your project? Will you need to get IRB approval?

6. Assumptions: What things do you hold true for your project?
7. Risks: What are the negative risks that could occur as a result of your project? What are the positive risks that could occur?
8. Deliverables: What things do you need to complete (activities/tasks) to make your project successful?
9. Schedule: What needs to be done and when? Timeline for completion of capstone, including proposed schedule for meeting with advisor(s), deadlines for completion of research and chapters/sections, projected defense date
10. Consideration of any potential obstacles and the feasibility of the proposed capstone
11. Milestones: What are your milestones?
12. Activities: What steps have to occur to make the milestones completed? Such as evidence that necessary workplace approvals have been granted (attach as appendix); evidence that necessary human subject research approval has been requested or granted (attach as appendix)
13. Dependencies: What is the relationship between activities? Which activities are dependent on other activities to be completed first?
14. Measures of Success: What are your measures of success? How will you assess the quality of your deliverable?
15. People: Who needs to be on your project team? Who are your stakeholders?
16. Communication: How will communicate? To whom? About what? And when?
17. Closure: How will you know your project is done? How will you celebrate?

Your team's Project Charter should be specific, goal-oriented, and clear. It is also important that your team identify what you will present as a deliverable to the client organization. The statement of proposed method should describe if you are using interviews, survey, library or database research. The methods are contingent upon your topic. When you do identify the methods provide a statement of why your team chose to do so. Your project may require workplace approval from your client as some companies have internal policies that govern their information. You may need the approval of a decision maker within the organization before your team plans on using proprietary material in your report.

Assignment 3 - Monthly Reports

Your group will be required to complete and submit monthly reports (minimum of 2 pages) addressing the issues below. This is brief paper due on (date to be determined). You will use this as the basis of your discussion with the Capstone Advisor.

1. Objectives of your project
2. Develop a Project Plan and outline the steps with dates and who is responsible for each item

3.   What do you need at this time from your client?
4.   What steps have you taken in completing the Trends in Literature?
5.   Challenges your group is facing now please list these

   Meetings times will be set with the Capstone Advisor and the meetings are worth 10% of the final grade.

Assignment 4 - Self-Evaluation

Complete the following self-report you are required to submit this report at the first week and again one week before the presentation and is worth 5% of the final grade. Copies of this form are available on the Moodle site.

Assignment 5 - Peer Evaluation

You will be required to complete a similar form as the one above on your team members twice during the semester and is worth 5% of the final grade.

Assignment 6 - Final Report

The next chapter will describe the report in detail. Including the length and specific sections. This assignment is worth 35% of the final grade. (See Chapter 6 for more details on grading schema).

Assignment 7 - Formal Presentation - Defense

Your group is required to make a formal presentation referred to as a defense. A defense is a term that simply denotes a discussion of your capstone before the Capstone Advisor and possibly others from your program. All team members must be present and participate in the defense. You will not receive a passing grade for the course if you do not attend the defense and participate in the presentation. For many this is the final step in the evaluation of your work in your Master program, and the tradition of "defending" your capstone serves as a rite of passage from student to a professional.

The Defense should include a power point or some other visual presentation that discusses the main points of the capstone project. All defenses must be scheduled before the last day of instruction during the semester.

The presentation should be at a minimum 15 minutes in length but no more than 45 minutes and you should leave at least 15 minutes for questions. The client should be invited and you are encouraged to invite colleagues, family, and friends to the presentation.

The presentation using the Clark PowerPoint Template should include the following sections:

- Project title
- Background of the project
- Goals and purpose of the project
- Description of the project process and outcomes
- Salient Issues identified in the report
- Recommendations
- Implications for your professional development
- Acknowledgements to people that assisted you in completing the project

Assignment 8 – Summary Reflection on the Capstone Experience

This will not be presented to the client and is submitted individually for each group member to the Capstone Advisor. This individual paper is a reflection by the student detailing lessons learned from the Capstone experience, the student's overall education, and especially coursework, contributed to the final proposal and project. This assignment represents 10% of the final grade.

The Final Report

Your completed report will include several key sections and will usually be made up of approximately 75-125 pages. In addition, Capstone teams are strongly encouraged to send a hand written thank you note to their client after the official presentation. This closure activity is considered a sign of professionalism.

This is the suggested outline of the Capstone **Final Report**:

Initial Pages:

- Title/Cover page – Capstone Project
- Acknowledgement – your client, stakeholders, advisor, team members
- Table of Contents – identify the pages where the reader can find the information
- Executive Summary about two pages that tells the reader how the work came about, how it was conducted, a summary of findings, some of the salient points, and the final recommendation

Chapter One Introduction

- Provide the background information on the project and what the report will address. You can include the history of the organization, as it is relevant to the project.
- Statement of the Problem (clearly define the issue, address important and relevant concepts, examine contextual concerns)
- Purpose of the Capstone Project
- Significance of the Capstone Project
- What the Reader will find in the Subsequent Chapter

Chapter Two Literature Review or Trends in the Industry

- Focuses on important research
- Clearly explains what is known and not known about the issue and this particular problem of practice
- Trends in the industry (Identify the contemporary trends. Be sure to make copies of the articles that you used and include these in the final report in the appendix. Be sure to find articles pertaining to what the client has told you).

Chapter Three Methods
- Design (surveys, interviews, etc.)
- Materials
- Ethical Concerns
- Data Analysis

Chapter Four Results and Reflection

- Findings based on your research
- Salient Issues (Identify the major issues that you discovered about the topic, the organization, and the field or industry).
- Reflection – what was learned from the Capstone project both about the client, the issue and your professional development and growth

Chapter Five Summary Conclusion

- Recommendations for Practice - – Highlight what you found and provide the client with concrete recommendations

Appendix -Provide the client with all of the supporting materials you used in conducting the study or consultation. Your appendix should also include a copy of your final presentation slides; project charter, and other collateral material (survey results, etc.)

In order to complete the report it is important the team defines and works on several steps along the way. These include:

- Develop a conceptual framework
- Develop research questions
- Develop a plan of analysis and a plan of action
- Analyze the results
- Identify the salient issues about the topic or the organization
- Make recommendations for action
- Summarize the report
- Construct and appendices

Developing a conceptual framework is the lens your team will use to look at the issues in the organization. Your group must specify the perspective you are using and a conceptual framework must be selected. It is possible to combine more than one perspective, but your will have to indicate why this is being done. The framework must be drawn from current thinking, theory and practice in the discipline that you are working with. For example, for MSPC, the framework must be drawn from communication thought and literature. The conceptual framework selected must be directly relevant to the particular problem selected. This will help you focus on the precise objectives of the study, the relevant literature and the appropriate organizational experience.

Developing the research questions helps the team to refine the issue or problem and begin its investigation. Generally, there should not be more than 4 research questions that you are attempting to answer.

Once the problem has been specified the team should construct a plan of analysis and action--a roadmap for the project. It must indicate:

- Specific objectives of the study,
- Method(s) that will be used in gathering data,
- Size and method of selecting your sample,
- Organization or data base on which the study will be based
- Any potential outcome(s) of the plan of analysis.

It is understood that along the way new constraints will arise that were unanticipated. This plan becomes the core of the capstone and must describe the particular methods that will be used to evaluate or understand the feasibility or impact of one or more alternatives for responding to the problem selected. Plans may need to be altered to cope with unforeseen constraints. In spite of these constraints the plan should serve as your guideline and that you should always try to accomplish as many of the objectives of the plan as is possible, rather than change your plan in the middle of the research process. In real life, public policy plans meet unforeseen constraints and part of the creative process of the capstone is demonstrating your ability to keep to the task in spite of these unforeseen circumstances. An important part of this plan of action is to develop a set of milestones that will be an action guideline for the project.

Once this is done the team can move to analysis of what it has gathered. This is the point at which you tie the data to the specific problem studied and indicate the meaning of the findings for solving the problem selected. Your interpretation should indicate whether the alternative will "work";

- How your findings support or do not support your original thesis
- In what way is your analysis consistent or not consistent with the literature and/or past organizational experience;
- Specification of any limits, alternatives and unexpected findings of your research.

Your client is counting on you to make recommendations and the purpose of this project is to be an exercise in applied research, no applied research project has worth if it does not draw from the data analysis a set of recommendations for action for the client. This step, in fact, is the reason for the project. Each team member has contributed his/her part to the project for the express purpose of drawing up action guidelines. In the real world the goal of research is action: to improve some part of the organization, to create alternatives to overcome unproductive patterns, or develop a cost- benefit analysis of a strategy.

The summary is an important part of your report to the client and should not be seen as just a statement ending the exercise. This is where you want to impress upon the client the important of your analysis and recommendations.

Lastly, you need to pull all the additional and ancillary materials together for the client to re- view at some later point. This may be very helpful to a manager now or later on in the history of the organization.

Resources

Here you will find a number of resources that may help you and the members of your team in completing the capstone project.

Designing an Effective Capstone Presentation

- You must use the Clark standard PowerPoint template. Avoid using fly-over graphics and other enhancements.
- Don't clutter and distract the audience. Too many colors and fonts can be a distraction
- Create a stand-out title slide- provide the title and date, list the faculty advisor, and include a professional and tasteful picture of your team.
- Devote a slide at the beginning of the presentation for the outline
- Tell the audience exactly what your team will present
- Follow your outline through the presentation
- One slide equals about 90 seconds of talk, so a 20-minute presentation will have somewhere be- tween 15-20 slides.
- Slides should not go beyond 6 lines of text - use bullets whenever possible
- Include images to breakup text and try to find copyright-free images
- Summarize data in a table and keep colors consistent. Use a set of three or four colors throughout the presentation

Writing Tips

You may have heard the old adage there is no such thing as good writers, there are only good re- writers. This is a comprehensive project and it will require many drafts. In addition, working with team means there can be several different writing styles. One team member should take responsibility for editing, which includes re-writing and giving the report one voice. Here are a few practical writing tips:

- If your team has chosen a topic you are passionate about, writing will be less tedious.
- Read widely and actively. Reread, underline, write down your thoughts and impressions in note- books, and copy out quotations. Writing while you read is the best way to become an active reader.
- Spend a great deal of time working on your thesis. The thesis is the cornerstone upon which any great paper is built. It should be clear and concise. Try to be original and familiarize yourself with the scholarly debate surrounding your topic, and see if you can come up with a perspective you've never heard.
- Start writing in the appropriate format and style guide requirements from the beginning; it's much easier than stressing about it as the end when you have a deadline to meet.
- Set a time limit for the research aspects as research can go on for a long time leaving too little time for writing.

- Try to write every day. Keep in the writing habit and if you can't write anymore, make it a day to proof read and re-write.
- Find the time of day you are at your best to write and try to make that the writing time.
- Your project document should follow **APA guidelines**. Here are two great resources to help you:

The Official APA Style Guide Site: http://www.apastyle.org
Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): http://2-plan.com/help/2-plan-desktop-manuals.html

Project Management Resources

You can download a free project management software to help plan, organize and monitor your Capstone project. http://2-plan.com/help/2-plan-desktop-manuals.html. Another resource is Office 365 Task Planner.

The Capstone Paper

The purpose of the Capstone Research Paper is to present an investigation and inquiry into a question, problem, or issue an organization is facing. Chapter Four details the suggested format for the paper.

Self-Reflection on the Capstone Project

This will not be presented to the client and should be submitted individually for each group member to the Capstone Advisor. This separate paper would be devoted to the student reflecting on how his or her project, the student's overall education, and especially coursework, contributed to the final proposal and project.

General Writing Guidelines

Organization: Each chapter requires and introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction pro- vides a sufficient background on the topic and previews major points. Paragraph transitions are present, logical, and maintain the flow throughout the paper. The tone is appropriate to the content and assignment. The conclusion is logical, flows from the body of the paper, and reviews the major points.

Mechanics: The paper—including tables and graphs, headings, title page, and reference page— is consistent with APA formatting guidelines. Intellectual property is recognized with in-text citations and a reference section. Rules of spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed. Sentences are complete, clear, concise, and varied.

Knowing Your Personal Resources

It should be clear by now that you are working as a member of a team, which means you can call upon your strengths to contribute to the completion of this important project. There are four areas a professional should measure their skills against;

1. Knowing your competencies
2. Knowing what areas needing development
3. Personal resources and supports and
4. Your story

A suggestion is to complete this assessment and then discuss the results with your team members. This could help your team identify who is best suited for each job and how you can support one another throughout the project. The form can be found on Moodle.

Conclusion and Timeline

A capstone is defined as a finishing stone fixed on top of a structure or the crowning stroke or culmination. Both meanings point to this project as evidence of what you have learned over your course of study in your program. At time this may seem daunting but when it is completed, the Capstone often becomes one of the most rewarding and valuable experiences in your graduate career.

A Capstone course allows an institution to evaluate and substantiate if students are learning the necessary skills needed to continue onto success after graduation. Yet the completion of a Capstone can be used as a part of an employment portfolio. By integrating theory and practical experience, your project can set you apart from graduates of other institutions. Imagine how valuable it would be to interview with a potential employer office with an applied research project exploring solutions to an issue or problem the organization, or industry as a whole, has been grappling with.

Timeline for the Capstone Project

As outlined in Chapter 3, there are several parts to this project that need to be accomplished and listed below are the key dates and weight towards final grade.

Preliminary Client Reports

Week 3 - Report before 1st Meeting
Week 4 - Project Charter

On-Going Monitoring Reports

Monthly Reports due the last week of the month
for a total of 3 Reports. Each report is 2 page narrative.

Performance Evaluation

Week 1 - Self -Evaluation 1
Week 13 - Self-Evaluation 2
Week 7 Peer Evaluation
Week 12 Peer Evaluation

Final Reports

Week 14 - Final Capstone Report
Week 14 - Capstone Defense
Week 14- Summary Reflection

Final grades are determined by group and individual work. If a team member does not contribute fully to the Capstone project the student may receive a different grade from their team members. Final grades will be not granted until the Capstone Advisor receives:

- Bound Hardcopy and Electronic copy of the Capstone Report
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Self-Evaluation and Peer evaluation forms
- Summary Reflection from each individual team member.

Grading

Activity	Detail	Estimated hours	Percentage of grade (%)
In class activities	5 modules X 1.5	8	
Prep work for client meeting	Report before 1st Meeting	16	5
Client Requirements	Project Charter /Responsibility Matrix (WBS),	25	10
Monthly Team Status Reports	3 reports x 5 hours	15	10
2 Self-Evaluations and 2Peer Evaluation	Completed evaluation forms	10	10
Client Meetings	2 hours X 5	20	
Weekly Team Meeting	3 hours X 10	30	
Advisor Meetings	Per determined advisor schedule	10	10
Self-Reflection	Paper	15	5
Final Paper	Hard bound and electronic versions	40	35
Defense Presentation	Onsite hour presentation	1	15
	TOTAL	**180**	100

Glossary and Related Terms

Analytic and Problem Solving Skills

Uses analysis, wisdom, experience, and logical methods to solve difficult problems; incorporates multiple inputs to establish shared ownership and

APA Guidelines

The American Psychological Association (APA) has produced a publication that includes all of the rules that you need to know to produce a manuscript that conforms to their standards. This manual, now in the 5th edition, accepted as the gold standard by many academic disciples. Other common style manuals include The Chicago Manual of Style and The Modern Language Association Style Manual, (also known as "Chicago" and "MLA").

Capstone Project

A culminating experience calling upon your ability to analyze an organization's Issues and apply the competencies you developed through your program of study, an investigative effort that culminates in a final project deliverable and presentation. The project is aimed at least two audiences: (1) the client (organization who established a particular need) and (2) the program faculty who evaluate the report accompanying the deliverable to the client. This process builds a connection between the academic components of your program an application of knowledge to a "real-world" context.

Defense

A discussion of your capstone before the Capstone Advisor and possibly others your program. All team members must be present and participate in the presentation for the defense should include the following sections

- Project title
- Background of the project
- Goals and purpose of the project
- Description of the project process and outcomes
- Salient Issues identified in the report
- Recommendations
- Implications for your professional development
- Acknowledgements to people that assisted you in completing the project

Final Report

A comprehensive document that includes a cover page, acknowledgements, summary, introduction, literature review of trends in the industry, of methods, results and reflection and a summary and conclusion

IRB

Institutional Review Board is a committee established to review and approve involving human subjects. The purpose of the IRB is to ensure subject research be conducted in accordance with all federal, institutional, and ethical guidelines.

Monthly Reports

A five (5) point report presented to your Capstone Advisor outlining of your project, project plan for the month, needed from client, update in the literature, and challenges the group is facing.

Peer Evaluation

Your peers will assess your performance as a team member and ability and offer solutions. In turn you will be required to evaluate your peers well.

Capstone Project Deliverable

A demonstration of your professional competencies and evidence of your of theoretical knowledge applied to "real-world" issues. Examples includes: a set of public relations materials and a schedule of a training manual, a comprehensive communication audit a social media presence audit, a marketing plan and schedule, usability assessment.

Project Charter

A project charter must explain the business need that leads to the project being taken up. It also captures high level planning information (scope, deliverables, assumptions, etc.) about the project. The specifics of the project activities are developed later.   This document provides an outline with explanation of the composition of the various components of a project charter. It is designed to provide the project team with a road map for the project deliverable

Self-Evaluation

An evaluation of your performance as a team member and your ability and address problems and issues.

Self-Reflection

This individual paper is a reflection by the student detailing lessons learned the Capstone experience, the student's overall education, and especially contributed to the final proposal and project.

Teamwork

Responds and relates well to people in all positions; is seen as a team player, is cooperative; looks for common ground, and solves problems for the all; is an active and contributing participant.