Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS)

Onsite Program

Capstone Handbook (LIS 4901)

2023-2024

Morgridge College of Education

Contents

1. Introduction: What is a Capstone Project?

The Capstone Project is an in-depth academic study that offers an opportunity to explore a particular issue in much greater depth than is feasible in a class or seminar paper and to argue your perspective on that issue.

LIS 4901 Capstone (3 credit hours) is an alternative to the Culminating Internship. Either the Capstone OR the Culminating Internship is required for fulfillment of MLIS degree requirements.

As part of the Capstone course, students also need to reflect on the program learning outcomes and submit an Exit Essay.

Your project should be more than a synthesis of work already done on a particular topic; from your reading, you need to "create a research space" (Swales, 1990) that justifies the particular inquiry you undertake.

This means that you are expected to:

a)   look critically at how other thinkers have defined the issue/problem;
b)   decide from your critical assessment of their attempts how *you* can best define the issue/ problem; and
c)   evaluate the evidence other researchers may have already presented on the issue/problem to see whether a convincing analysis/answer has already been found.

You then need to:
d)   define the further questions that need to be addressed and decide which of these questions you can feasibly address in a small-scale study;
e)   define how you can gather "data" (or undertake some kind of inquiry) that will allow you to address those questions, again bearing in mind your limitations (time, access) you will need to justify your approach as the most appropriate one in the circumstances;
f)   define how you are going to analyze your material/data to be able to address your research questions and justify this approach to analysis;
g)   draw from your analysis the significant conclusions in answer to your research questions and relate your discussion of these back to your original "problem" or "question" (steps a through c above);
h)   discuss the limitations of your study in order to define its validity and use your discussion of limitations to explore your original approach to the "problem" further (e.g. specifying further research which could be undertaken);
i)   (optionally) use your conclusions to specify some kind of output, e.g. policy or operational recommendations; and
j)   present your results in a form suitable to the topic and present your work to your Faculty Supervisor and Second Reader through a session open to the public.

The key to a satisfactory project is the logical progression from introduction to conclusion; from research questions to investigation; and to the conclusions which address the research questions in some significant way. That logic needs to be made

clear to your readers.

While you cannot undertake sustained empirical research at this stage, you should undertake some form of original analysis which enables you to explore the question you identify in a way you judge to be appropriate. The study, then, is an opportunity for you to make your contribution to Library and Information Science. It requires commitment, self-discipline, stamina, and time spent identifying and collecting published research but it is also a challenging, stimulating, and satisfying project!

2. The Details: What Do I Need to Do?

You must be approved to take LIS 4901 before you can register for the course. That means you will need to do a little legwork early on, at least the quarter before you intend to register for your Capstone.

Topic:
The first step to the Capstone is your topic. The topic is intended to reflect your overall interests and be representative of your cumulative MLIS graduate experience. In addition, the Capstone should serve as a launchpad for your professional career.

Length of Paper:
The expected length of your paper is 20-25 pages, so the topic should be narrow enough that your research can be covered in the allotted number of pages. Identifying an alternative to the research paper format is an issue you will need to discuss with your faculty supervisor.

Faculty Supervisor and Second Reader:

Faculty Supervisor
Based on your initial idea, you will identify a Faculty Supervisor from the DU LIS faculty who has some knowledge about the area in which you wish to work. Bear in mind that your Capstone supervisor will not necessarily be an expert on the *specific* question you wish to investigate ... that expert in fact will be you. Students should make contact with their potential supervisor no later than the quarter prior to their Capstone.

The purpose of starting work on the Capstone project early is to provide you with adequate time to read and study your subject, so that you will arrive in the quarter of registration with a more focused idea and/or area for investigation.

It is very important that you keep in touch with your supervisor. Each Capstone supervisor will notify you of a required meeting schedule.

Supervisors typically discuss issues such as the scope of the project, the academic suitability of your project, methodologies, and resources to use, and sources of information or assistance. In addition, they may comment on preliminary plans and drafts. If you encounter problems or are unsure about the way ahead, talk things over with your supervisor.

In the end, however, you are the person who knows most about your project and thus

the only person who can assume responsibility for what it contains. Your supervisor cannot offer any supervision which might be interpreted as substantially contributing to the project itself. For example, you should not expect your supervisor to revise a final draft of your study. Nor can they tell you in advance whether your draft paper will pass or not.

Use your supervisor wisely. As far as possible, prepare for meetings by identifying beforehand what it is that you wish to discuss, or feel you need help with. If you are asking your supervisor to give their opinion on your progress, please give them enough time (preferably at least a week) to read your work.

<u>Second - Reader</u>
The role of the Second Reader is to evaluate the completed capstone project. Receiving feedback from the Second Reader is optional. The Second Reader is not involved in the proposal creation stage or the stage of data collection and analysis. The core LIS faculty, the affiliate faculty at the DU Libraries, library and information science practitioners and researchers, as well as peers with expertise in the subject matter, can serve as the Second Readers.

Proposal Form: You must complete a Capstone Project Proposal Form which includes a 2-3 paragraph tentative thesis topic and research design and the signature of your Faculty Supervisor. Your Faculty Supervisor's signature indicates approval of the Project. Once you have completed the form, you will be given the CRN for registering for the Capstone.

LIS 4901 Capstone Approval Form

Student Name:

Student ID:

Term of Capstone Registration:

Title of Capstone:

Abstract:
2-3 paragraph (single-spaced) tentative thesis topic research design

Project Timeline:

Student Signature and Date:

Faculty Supervisor Signature and Date:

Please complete and return this form to your faculty supervisor before the end of the quarter prior to the quarter in which you register for the Capstone.

Deadlines

Deadlines for each part of the Capstone are listed below. Dates must be met by each student. **There will be no exceptions made on deadlines. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade or failure of the course.**

Quarter Prior to Capstone	Students should be reading and taking notes for their Capstone topic; make initial contact with a potential Faculty Supervisor and with a second reader.
	In discussion with the Capstone Supervisor, the data collection method will be chosen. If data collection involves human subjects, you must follow the University of Denver Institutional Review Board guidelines. Prior to submitting the information required by the IRB Guidelines, you may need to be authorized to submit your request only after you have completed training in the use of human subjects. This training is available at https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/
	Additional information on this topic can be found at the DU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs website: http://www.du.edu/orsp/research-compliance/education-training/index.html
Prior to Term Registration Deadlines	Proposal Form for LIS 4901 must be approved by the Capstone Supervisor. CRN given to student.
	The planned schedule of meetings with the Faculty Supervisor must be identified.
All Quarter	The student is responsible for working independently and meeting with Faculty Supervisor according to the predetermined schedule.
Week 5	Turn in a **complete first draft** to your Faculty Supervisor.
Week 6	Submit the **Exit Essay** to your Faculty Supervisor.
Week 8	Submit your Capstone paper to your Faculty Supervisor and Second Reader for feedback.
Week 10	Present your Capstone project in a public presentation. Submit the final version of the Capstone paper to your supervisor.

4. How should the Capstone Paper and Public Presentation be organized and formatted?

Most studies will be organized in the following way:

1. *Title Page*
   Your title page should give the title of your study, your name, the words "Library and Information Science Program: Capstone Project", the submission date, and the name of the faculty member who has supervised your work.

2. *Abstract*
   Your study is a contribution to thinking in your chosen field. For this purpose, a summary of your study is required (250 words max) which will allow other researchers to get an idea of your approach and your conclusions. The usual structure for an abstract is given below:

   a. **Aim**
      What the study sets out to do
   b. **Background**
      The context and rationale for the dissertation
   c. **Procedure**
      How the study is organized; what it covers
   d. **Method**
      The approach or methodology used in the study
   e. **Findings**
      The key findings of the study
   f. **Conclusions**
      The principle conclusions or recommendations.

b) *Contents Page*
   The Contents Page provides your reader with a quick guide to what is in your study and how it is organized. It should contain the title of each of your sections or subheadings, along with appropriate page numbers. You should also present a list of figures, tables, and appendices.

c) *Introduction*
   Your Introduction is where you set out in detail what you intend to do in the rest of the study. It is also where you discuss your reasons for undertaking this particular inquiry. So, the Introduction defines the study. For that reason it is sometimes the last thing you write; it needs to be written based on the knowledge of what you have discovered in your inquiry.

   It needs to contain:
   - A description of *what* you are going to do
   - A justification and description of your methods - i.e. *how* you intend to proceed
   - a discussion of *why* it is important.

d) *Subheadings and Sections*
   The subheadings or sections of your study are where you demonstrate what you have done in your inquiry and your findings. How you organize them is up to you.

Try to keep your overall title constantly in mind when you are starting and finishing a section. You need to help your reader see the relevance of each section to your overall question, summarized in your title.

e) *Conclusion*

Your Conclusion is where you draw together the results of your inquiry. What have you discovered in the process and why is it significant?

Try not to use your conclusion just as a space in which you repeat what you have already said; talk about the results, but also think about discussing their wider implications.

f) *Appendices (optional)*

In consultation with your Faculty Supervisor, you may append documents applicable to your study such as the survey instrument; the data; background information; and so on.

Document Format Guidelines

A high level of care in presentation is essential.

1. Your study must be word-processed or typed on 8.5" x 11" paper, and on one side of the page only.
2. Your study must be double-spaced throughout, except for quotations longer than three lines, which should be should be indented and single-spaced. Appendices should be single-spaced within entries and 1.5 or double-spaced between entries. You should use a 12-point standard font, e.g. Times or Arial.
3. Pages must be numbered in the lower center.
4. You should have margins of at least 1 inch all around your text.
5. Most references should appear within the text, not in footnotes. If you feel footnotes with additional comments are necessary, then these should appear at the bottom of your page and kept to a minimum.
6. Citations *must* be accurate. A bibliographical reference *must* be provided for all citations.
7. Accuracy in your use of English is assumed, as is the correct spelling. Please use a spell-checker and proofread your work rigorously.
8. Please ensure a clear presentation of any tables, figures, or diagrams.
9. Finally, you *must*:
   o avoid language use that might be found to be deliberately offensive,
   o ensure confidentiality where appropriate when referring to informants or subjects of your research,
   o acknowledge any sources or other assistance meticulously.

Public Presentation Guidelines

As with your document, you should prepare and present a professional quality public presentation. In consultation with the Capstone Supervisor, you will determine the organization of presentation content, the amount of time you will devote to each content, and the nature of the supporting materials, e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.

The typical organization of the presentation will follow the structure of the abstract. However, it is also typical to allot more time to the Findings and Conclusions

compared to the time allotted for the other components. These components are:

a. **Aim**
   What the study sets out to do
b. **Background**
   The context and rationale for the dissertation
c. **Procedure**
   How the study is organized; what it covers
d. **Method**
   The approach or methodology used in the study
e. **Findings**
   The key findings of the study
f. **Conclusions**
   The principle conclusions or recommendations.

5. Research prior to writing

Reading widely and tracking down the relevant literature is only the first step toward writing a good project. As a very rough guideline, you are likely to consult at least 30 books and/or articles in the course of your research. You are expected to have reviewed the relevant articles in the current journals and to have conducted a bibliographical search from either print-based and/or electronic abstracting databases. You should not rely on your supervisor to point you to the relevant recent literature on your question.

You are probably best advised to get down to doing this work as soon as you can and certainly well before the start of the quarter. Even though we have great library resources at the University of Denver, some key texts may not be immediately available on campus, thus you will probably need to request a number of texts/books and journal articles from interlibrary loans. Do this early on since it takes time.

6. Drafting

As you get more and more familiar with your topic, you will start to formulate your assessments of the evidence currently available and develop your arguments. A mere reporting of other scholars' theories does not make a good research paper, however well organized. A Capstone Project must have an argument, that is, a logical progression from a question to a (tentative) answer.

Your aim, then, is to evaluate ideas and evidence, raise new questions, examine these questions systematically and coherently, and draw out well-justified conclusions on the basis of what you have found. You are not required to put forward a revolutionary new theory or provide conclusive evidence to support a particular position. Nevertheless, you are expected to a) undertake a carefully considered inquiry using appropriate research tools which will allow you to draw some non-trivial conclusions, and b) indicate the limitations of your inquiry and, where appropriate, how other scholars might research your question more fully than you have.

7. Revising and proofreading

A Capstone study should have a tight, coherent structure, show in-depth knowledge of

the topic and develop logical arguments leading to careful conclusions. You must also follow referencing conventions rigorously. These are set out below. You should be meticulous about clarity of expression and spelling, as well as the presentation of any data.

Most of us are not good at proofreading our work; ask somebody else to help you proofread your final version.

8. Guidelines for the use of references

The Morgridge College of Education uses the APA citation style and reference guidelines. Consult with your Faculty Supervisor about the current edition in use.

9. Assignments

Assignment	Points	%	Due date
A1 Exit Essay	150	15%	Week 6
A2 Capstone presentation	200	20%	Week 9 - 10
A3 Capstone paper	600	60%	Week 10
Participation	50	5%	
Total	1000	100%	

A1: Exit essay, 15%, due Week 6
The goal of the exit essay is for students to reflect on the knowledge and skills gained throughout the graduate program about the program's learning outcomes. For each of the student learning outcomes listed below, provide a brief statement describing your achievement of that outcome. You might provide specific examples for each outcome, such as an assignment or other learning experience in the context of classes taken in the program. You might also feel that you have not achieved a particular outcome; in this case, please analyze why you think so. Please do not omit any outcomes. There is no prescribed page length. A short paragraph for each outcome is sufficient. The LIS program will use these essays for program assessment.

Student Learning Outcomes

3. Defend LIS professional ethics and values.
4. Justify the importance of intellectual freedom in a variety of information access situations.
5. Characterize the attributes and values of teaching, service, research, and professional development to the advancement of the profession and personal career plans.
6. Characterize historical, current, and emerging aspects of information organizations and information producers.
7. Distinguish and apply multiple and emerging approaches to the

organization of information.

8. Analyze the interaction of individual characteristics and social factors with information environments.
9. Identify, evaluate, synthesize, and disseminate information for a variety of communities and users.
10. Demonstrate the interaction between information users and information resources, and how to improve that interaction.
11. Apply current management and leadership theories and practices in the creation, administration, and assessment of services.
12. Demonstrate competency with current information technologies.
13. Demonstrate professional communication skills, work behaviors, and respect for diversity.
14. Critique and construct library, archive, and information science research.

10. Grading Guidelines

As a general guideline, broad descriptors for grading are given below.

Grade A

A Capstone project awarded an "A" grade should:
- provide an independent perspective on knowledge and understanding.
- demonstrate in-depth and balanced discussion of the question addressed (this should be reflected in the bibliography).
- be consistent in argumentation and analysis, with all stages in the argument supported by carefully evaluated academic evidence.
- demonstrate a critical stance about knowledge and understanding; in particular, the limitations of claims should be recognized, and there should be evidence that alternative views and approaches have been critically evaluated.
- show clearly how conclusions are reached.
- demonstrate that the inquiry itself has been conducted rationally and systematically.
- there should be an absolute minimum of technical errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and referencing.

Grade B

- a question/questions for investigation is/are clearly stated and supported by a rationale.
- the exposition may be orthodox and derived from established academic sources, but a representative coverage of the literature will be provided (this should be reflected in the bibliography).
- the argumentation may lack detail but will provide a coherent basis for addressing the questions for inquiry and will lead to investigation using broadly appropriate methods.
- there should be evidence that research methods have been selected taking into consideration issues of reliability, validity, and ethics.
- despite some digressions and irrelevancies, the inquiry will shed some light on

the questions addressed and discussion of findings should link back to the theoretical rationale.

- the limitations of the inquiry will be addressed, leading to specifications for further research and/or development. The study should thus demonstrate some understanding of how to undertake an independent investigation.
- there may be some technical weaknesses, e.g. errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and referencing, but these should not significantly impede the reader.

NOTE: A grade of C or below will not qualify your Capstone for approval as a degree requirement.

Grade C

- a question/questions for investigation is/are stated and largely relate to the rationale.
- the exposition is orthodox and mainly derived from established academic sources. The coverage of the literature is adequate but some key texts are missing.
- the argumentation lacks sufficient detail but there is a basis for addressing the questions for inquiry and the methods used are broadly appropriate.
- there is little evidence of an awareness of methodological issues concerning reliability, validity, and ethics.
- despite digressions and irrelevancies, the inquiry will shed some light on the questions addressed and discussion of findings should link back to the theoretical rationale.
- the limitations of the inquiry are only partially addressed. The study should thus demonstrate some understanding of how to undertake an independent investigation.
- there are several weaknesses, e.g. technical errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and referencing, but these should not significantly impede the reader.

Grade D
- the study may succeed in identifying the issues implied by the title, but will not explore them in any depth.
- the structure will be adequate to outline an argument, but there are likely to be fairly major discrepancies, digressions, and irrelevancies in investigating the issues at stake; in particular, a coherent progression from the rationale to the research questions to the investigation and the conclusions is likely to be absent.
- important sections of work may be missing or very limited (e.g. literature review, inquiry, discussion, conclusions).
- a critical perspective on the knowledge and ideas presented will be lacking.
- the level of debate is likely to be superficial and predictable, with little evidence of intellectual engagement with the question chosen.
- much of the discussion is likely to be derivative, typically based on general textbooks.

Grade F

- failure to comply with the Faculty Supervisor/student meeting schedule.
- failure to do any of the following: provide drafts of the paper to the Faculty Supervisor or second reader by due dates; turn in the final draft to Faculty Supervisor, second reader, and Center by due dates; turn in Faculty Record Form to the Center by due date.
- the study neither succeeds in identifying the issues implied by the title nor will it explore them in any depth.
- the structure is inadequate to outline an argument, and there are major discrepancies, digressions, and irrelevancies in investigating the issues at stake; in particular, a coherent progression from the rationale to the research questions to the investigation and the conclusions is likely to be absent.
- important sections of work may be missing entirely (e.g. literature review, inquiry, discussion, conclusions).
- a critical perspective on the knowledge and ideas presented will be lacking.
- the level of debate is likely to be superficial and predictable, with little evidence of intellectual engagement with the question chosen.
- much of the discussion is likely to be derivative, typically based on anecdotes and non-academic sources.

Incomplete

Incompletes will only be considered for students who have special documented circumstances and will be decided by the supervisor and program coordinator on a case-by-case basis. Students who have emergencies during the semester, such as illness or family emergency, should notify their supervisor immediately and not wait until the end of the term.