

Master of Arts in  
**Policy Studies**

University of Washington Bothell  
*Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences*

*Capstone Project Guide*

2009 – 2010  
(Revised February 2009)

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Policy Studies curriculum and Capstone project forms are available online: <http://www.uwb.edu/ias/maps>

## Capstone Project Check List

√	Item	Timeline
<b>Year One</b>		
	Attend Capstone Roundtable Meeting. Begin considering Capstone supervisor choices	Week 8, Winter Quarter
	Consider your options, confer with individual professors, and submit a brief description of your intended project to Andrew Brusletten at <a href="mailto:abrusletten@uwb.edu">abrusletten@uwb.edu</a> . An electronic version of Appendix B will be distributed shortly after the Roundtable Meeting.	Week 4, Spring Quarter
	Once the IAS Graduate Office makes Capstone supervisor assignments, meet with your supervisor to establish preliminary tasks for the summer. Determine whether project will involve HSR, identify methodology, and define the scope of study.	Week 7 – 10 Spring Quarter
	Consider registering for independent study, if available, conduct literature review, and develop Capstone proposal draft.	Summer
<b>Year Two</b>		
	Complete draft of Capstone proposal. See Capstone Proposal Guidelines for more information.	Week 3 of Autumn Quarter
	Final approval of Capstone Proposal. Submit one copy with faculty supervisor signature on cover page (see <a href="http://www.uwb.edu/IAS/maps">http://www.uwb.edu/IAS/maps</a> ) to IAS Graduate Office. Students are encouraged to complete their Capstone proposals earlier than the deadline (and as early as possible) if they will be submitting them to Human Subjects for review.	Last day of Autumn Quarter
	Register for BPOLST 506. Faculty codes will be issued with the permission of your Capstone supervisor. Students must pass all core courses before they begin BPOLST 506.	End of autumn quarter
	Data Collection (pending Human Subjects approval, if required).	Winter quarter
	Register for BPOLST 508 (Requires permission of Capstone supervisor).	End of winter quarter
	Apply for Graduation <a href="http://www.grad.washington.edu/stsv/mastapp.htm">http://www.grad.washington.edu/stsv/mastapp.htm</a>	April – May
	Policy Studies Graduate Research Conference – Final presentation of Capstone project	Friday of Week 7, Spring Quarter
	Submit two tape-bound copies of final manuscript page to IAS Graduate Office. With permission, students can arrange to have Capstone supervisors stop by the IAS Graduate Office to sign manuscripts.	Friday of Week 10, Spring Quarter

## **The Place of the Capstone Project in Graduate Study**

The **Capstone Project** represents one of the most significant portions of the Policy Studies curriculum. The project is the integration of all facets of your learning experience. It demonstrates your ability to use the tools of policy research by examining a selected contemporary policy issue. While the Capstone Project is not intended to involve extensive original investigation, any conclusions reached must be so supported that their proof is considered well-established.

The Capstone requirement is designed to accomplish a number of goals for your educational experience, including:

1. Provision for the application of an accepted method of inquiry.
2. Enhancement of the student's skills in reading and interpreting analytic studies.
3. Improvement of appreciation and an understanding of problems involved in research and its application in real world settings.
4. Provision for practice in recognizing and delimiting research problems.
5. Student's enthusiasm and capacity for engaging in analytical investigation.
6. Improvement in the ability of the student to communicate ideas and research.
7. Enhancement of the overall scholarship of the graduate students.

## **Preparation for the Capstone**

Prior to registration for the Capstone course students must meet the following requirements.

1. Successful completion of all required foundation core coursework with a minimum of 2.7 in each core course and a 3.0 cumulative grade point average.
2. Selection of an appropriate research question approved by the Capstone Supervisor.
3. An approved Capstone proposal must be on file with IAS Graduate Office by the announced deadline. Late proposals may be accepted on the recommendation of the Capstone Supervisor.

## **Appeal Process**

If a student believes that his or her Capstone proposal was unfairly denied approval and no satisfactory resolution is reached between the Capstone Supervisor and the student, then the student may bring the issue to the Graduate program manager in writing (with a copy to the instructor). The Manager will consult with the instructor and the IAS Director to determine whether the proposal evaluation was appropriate. If the IAS Director concludes the evaluation of the proposal was fair and reasonable, the student should be so informed and the issue be concluded. If the Director concludes that the instructor's review of the work was arbitrary and capricious, and if the instructor declines to approve the proposal, the Director and Manager will appoint a panel of faculty members to evaluate the student's proposal and issue a recommendation for or against approval.

## **Change of Capstone Supervisor**

Students are discouraged from changing Capstone Supervisors during the Capstone process; however, a student may elect to change Capstone Supervisors with the consent of his or her current Capstone Supervisor, the proposed new Capstone Supervisor, and the Graduate program manager. The student should make the request to the Graduate program manager in writing with a letter of support from the current and proposed Capstone Supervisors (email is acceptable for the faculty letters). Requests made prior to enrollment in the Capstone course will generally be approved. Requests made during enrollment in either of the Capstone courses (BPOLST 506 or 508) will be vetted more closely and will only be approved if extenuating circumstances require the change. Unilateral changes at the request of either the student or the faculty member will be approved by the program only in the rarest of circumstances and require demonstration of irreconcilable conflict between the student and faculty with regard to the academic project.

## **Identification of a Topic and Capstone supervisor**

### The Selection of the Problem

It is assumed that the student is generally oriented or competent in the field in which he or she will pursue his or her Capstone project.

In designing a Capstone project, the student should consider these points:

1. Has prior research been done on the problem?
2. Is further work feasible?
3. Does the problem engender a desire to solve it?
4. Will the study make a contribution?
5. Does solution of the problem demand abilities in excess of those possessed?
6. Is there an opportunity to do work in the field?
7. How much data are available?
8. How much time will be required to conduct the study?
9. What financial cost will the study involve?
10. Is the study sufficiently broad in scope for a Master's study?
11. Is this project going to be published? If so, you must apply for Human Subjects Review.

### **Faculty Sponsored Research Projects**

The program will advertise projects sponsored by faculty who are actively engaged in policy research projects and wish to work with Policy Studies students. Students who wish to participate in a faculty-sponsored research may design their Capstone experience around that research project. The faculty member sponsoring the research will act as the Capstone Supervisor and the student will be responsible for submitting all relevant documents outlined in this guide.

### **Obtaining a Capstone supervisor**

When the student has selected, analyzed, and outlined a problem in conformity with requirements as explained in this guide, the faculty will meet to divide up supervision of the projects, and then the Graduate program manager will announce the final matches. Students must meet with their advisors to discuss the proposed project before the end of spring quarter of their first year.

The student and the advisor must work together to refine and improve the student's original outline of the problem. These conferences are designed to (1) reaffirm and further clarify the educational significance and feasibility of the proposed problem, (2) assist the student in perfecting his or her plans for development of the Capstone project through the pre-proposal, and (3) establish a timeline with benchmarks that will allow the student and faculty member to assess progress on the Capstone project. Students are encouraged to review projects that the Capstone Supervisor believes to be good models.

### **The Pre-Proposal**

#### The Exploratory Development of the Problem

Determining the nature and scope of any problem requires careful analysis, particularly at the outset. Development of the pre-proposal also requires close collaboration with your Capstone supervisor. The form and length of the pre-proposal depend on the nature of the project and will be determined by the Capstone faculty in consultation with the student. In general, the pre-proposal will be a relatively short document that addresses the following:

1. Selection of the problem

2. Exploratory development of the problem
3. Formulation of a tentative Capstone outline

Once the student has selected the Capstone topic, he or she should begin immediately to develop a bibliography related to research in the problem area. The student must endeavor to assemble all accessible information pertinent to previous research bearing upon the proposed problem.

### **The Capstone Project Proposal**

There is no established form to be followed for the Capstone project proposal, but the topics covered below should be included. As with the pre-proposal, additional appropriate sub-headings are permissible. The primary consideration is that the proposal be complete and specific. All proposals should be double-spaced, unless otherwise noted, and should conform to acceptable style requirements.

#### **Timeline for Project Completion**

Please include a timeline to indicate how you expect to proceed with various aspects of the project such as data collection, interviews, literature review in order to complete by the end of the academic year, keeping in mind that you are expected to complete data collection by the end of winter quarter, and produce a final product by the end of spring quarter.

#### **Statement of problem**

The statement of the problem should be concise. What is the policy question you want to research? Why is this an interesting policy question that you want to investigate? Information needs to indicate the significance of the study to the specific policy area being addressed. The problem may arise from a theoretical question about policy making or from a specific circumstance that presents practical, consequential questions for policy implementation. The matter proposed for study should demonstrate relevance beyond a small group of practitioners or a single community.

The statement will indicate the general purpose of the study, and relate the problem to general theories and accepted bodies of knowledge. Wherever appropriate, the proposal should specify how it could benefit administrators in the field or particular interest groups and/or the public at large, how it is related to the institution or organization (if applicable), and what contribution it will make to your professional development.

#### **Literature Review**

The most important prior research or writing pertinent to the problem at hand should be identified. It is not necessary to exhaust all prior writing on the subject, but there should be an indication of substantial familiarity with the material and a clear definition of its relationship to the proposed study. The essential difference(s) between the proposed study and prior research will be explicitly identified. What has been studied and researched about the subject by other scholars? How does their findings help you understand your own question, or do you disagree with their findings or research methods? Why?

#### **Methodology**

What kind of data do you need to research your policy question? If you are using secondary data, are you 100% positive that the data exist, are complete, and available by February? If you want to interview people, are you sure they will talk to you? This section of the proposal should demonstrate how the objectives of the study will be accomplished. Specific steps to be taken to answer the questions or to test the hypotheses should be indicated. Data should be provided that will indicate what sort of information will be obtained, how it will be obtained, and how it will be analyzed. Where appropriate, sampling procedures should be indicated, measuring instruments fully described, and statistical analyses identified. If instruments are to be developed during the study, the procedure for their development should be described; if instruments have already been developed specifically for this study, they should be attached.

Limitations of the study should be indicated in this section of the proposal. This may be accomplished by indicating such factors as the population to be studied, the time period considered, the origin and composition of information to be used, and any other information that might indicate potential sources of error for the design or

limitations of the framework within which the study will be conducted. The approximate time schedule anticipated for the completion of various phases or aspects of the project should be noted.

#### Selected bibliography

This may not be the final bibliography that will be included with the final project, but should deal essentially with those references discussed in the Literature Review section above.

#### **Establishing an Internship Site**

Students are encouraged to work with their Capstone Supervisor and the External Relations Coordinator to establish an appropriate internship or fieldwork site. Students may wish to consult Coordinates, the electronic newsletter, for internship positions, as well as other electronic correspondence sent by the IAS Graduate Office. The purpose of the internship or fieldwork is to provide a context for the Capstone project with a real world problem, and to provide access to professional advice and mentorship through the internship or fieldwork experience. Students should draw on this experience as they develop the Capstone project, and produce a product that is of value to the organization as well as fulfilling the academic requirements for the Policy Studies program.

#### **Graduate Research Conference**

The purpose of the Graduate Research Conference is to provide the student with an opportunity to present Capstone findings and receive feedback from faculty, professionals, other graduate students, and the community. The student's presentation should include the problem to be addressed, hypothesis, need for study, review of the literature, research design, findings, and implications for policy and/or further study. The Graduate Research Conference takes place in May.

The presentations will use a conference style panel format. Students will be arranged in panels by topic, research method and/or advisor. Each panel is scheduled for an hour and a half and will typically have three or four panelists. Each presenter will be introduced by a faculty discussant and will have approximately 15 – 20 minutes to present. The discussant will also offer analysis following the presentations and moderate questions from the audience.

#### **The Capstone Manuscript**

##### Introduction

Even though there is no standard format for a research report, there is considerable consensus with respect to many elements of the format. The description of format presented here represents some of the common elements. However, before making a decision about format, consult with your faculty Capstone supervisor and, if applicable, your internship supervisor.

##### Style of the Report

1. The anticipated audience for the report consists of professionals who are doing research work in same area. The report should be written in reference to this group.
2. Consistency in style and terminology is desired. Use an appropriate style manual (Chicago Manual of Style or Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association).
3. Simplicity, clarity, directness, and precision are all desired traits of research writing.
4. Avoid personal or unsupported judgments. Be objective.
5. The report should be written in the past tense with the exception of hypotheses and suggestions for future research.
6. The level of precision of the data reported should be appropriate to data collected and not beyond that level.

## Binding

Binding specifications have been established to maintain consistency, increase durability, and meet University of Washington library cataloging requirements. It is advisable to have your work bound at a local copy store such as Kinko's. The specifications are as follows:

- Tape binding
- Clear plastic front cover
- Stiff black back cover

## Title Page and Signature Page

*The title page is the first page of the manuscript. The signature page is the second page. These pages should not be included in the page numbering. (See Appendix A).*

## Individual Sections of the Report

The number of chapters in the Capstone is not fixed. Also, the sequence of items within a given chapter or even the nature of items to be grouped together is not standard. However, in most cases students will present their finding in a 5 chapter report format, generally grouped as described below.

### Chapter 1 – Purpose of the Study

- Statement of purpose (problem)
  - Justification of importance of the study
  - Definitions of terms (if you use anything that is unknown to most readers)
1. All sections should be brief.
  2. Problem statement should indicate the who, what, where and when of the study. Descriptions of these elements should be specific but not detailed.
  3. The problem statement should be located near the beginning of the chapter.
  4. Final operational details of the problem statement will be described in the methodology section so the problem statement should be made with this fact in mind.
  5. The first chapter should contain information necessary for a reader to place the general area of study. There should be some information (delimitations) to indicate the scope of the study.
  6. Major constructs of the problem statement should be defined if this is necessary. Complete operational definitions may occur later in the report (Methodology section). However, some stipulative definitions may be necessary to help the reader to follow the development of the Review of Literature.

### Chapter 2 – Review of Literature

1. Include only those references that have some immediate implications for the study. Be explicit in demonstrating or stating the relevance of all cited literature.
2. The review should be in the form of an integrated presentation of all material. It should not contain a simple listing (annotated bibliography).
3. When summarizing or comparing studies be sure to note possible differences between samples, measurement techniques, etc. Summarize only truly comparable sources.
4. How to construct a literature review? Consider the following issues: the selection of the problem, delimiting the scope of the problem, demonstrating the relationship of the study to previous

- knowledge, indication the contribution of the study, and examining tools and methods to investigate the problem.
5. The review of literature may contain both conceptual and research literature.
  6. The investigator must be selective with respect to the quality of the sources cited.

### **Chapter 3 – Methodology – The Who, What, When, Where of Data Collection**

- Statement of Methodology—What kind of data collection procedure will you use? Example: If you were to sample people from the community to interview, tell the reader what type of sampling procedure you would perform (Random, Stratified, Snowball). Same applies for Interviews, secondary data collection using cross tabs, correlation, regression etc....
  - Operational definitions
  - What are the dependent and independent variables in your study?
  - Data analysis techniques
  - Pretesting and pilot studies
1. The essential criterion for a well-written methodology section is whether or not replications of the study could be conducted by independent investigators using this section as a guide.
  2. Any data describing the sample are not results. They should be included in this chapter rather than in a “Results” chapter.
  3. The section describing measurement techniques should include some treatment of validity and reliability.
  4. The data analysis sections should contain information about the statistical analysis techniques that will be used. The practice of specifying levels of significance and statistical hypotheses is not uniform.
  5. It may be desirable, but is not yet common practice, to report the more important “blind alleys” or unproductive approaches considered and abandoned.

### **Chapter 4 – Results and Discussion**

The content of this chapter is usually arranged around headings related to the specific hypotheses of the study.

1. Results and discussion can both occur in the same chapter but they should be very clearly distinguished. Some writers prefer to present the results and discussion of each separate element of the study together rather than first listing all of the results followed by all of the discussion.
2. The term “results” refers to the actual data of the study. The term “discussion” refers to the interpretation of the data.
3. The discussions must be based on the data, not on the experience or background of the investigator.
4. The discussions should consider all possible alternate explanations of the data. There should be a definite decision stated in respect to these alternate explanations and the relationship between the decision and the data or the methodology should be indicated.
5. The discussions should also relate the study to the previous results reported in the review of literature.
6. The data must be accepted or the whole study should be abandoned prior to the presentation of results. Some investigators find all sorts of weaknesses in their study after they see data that does not support their belief. Don’t use “weakness” of the study to explain an undesired result.

7. The results section should contain both descriptive and inferential information. However, only summary values are usually presented. Complete data for all individual observations may be placed in an appendix of the report.

### **Chapter 5 – Conclusions**

- Summary
- Conclusion
- Limitations of the Study
- Suggestions for future investigation
- Implications of the study

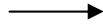
1. The conclusions should be stated in terms of the original research questions or hypothesis.
2. Both the implications and the suggestions for future research should be based on the results of the study.
3. The implications section may discuss the meaning of the data for educational practitioners or theorists.
4. The suggestions for future research may contain information representing new insights or unexpected results of the study.

### **Appendix**

The report may contain one or more appendices. These may contain detailed information that would distract from the report such as: copies of instruments used, sample lesson plans, complete listing of data, etc.

**APPENDIX A**

Title page template



[Title of your Document]

[Student Name]

A Capstone project presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Policy Studies  
Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences  
University of Washington Bothell  
[Year of graduation]

Signature page template



Master of Arts in Policy Studies  
Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences  
University of Washington Bothell

This is to certify that I have examined this copy of the Capstone manuscript by  
[Student Name]  
and found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects  
and that any and all revisions required by the faculty reviewers have been made

Faculty Reviewers:

\_\_\_\_\_

Capstone Supervisor: [Full name of Capstone supervisor]

\_\_\_\_\_

Second Reader: [Full name of second reader]

**APPENDIX B**

**Capstone Project Description**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student ID Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Evening Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Research Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Abstract** – Please write a detailed description of your intended Capstone project. Specify your intended research question, methodology, level of aggregation, key stakeholders, and any other relevant information. (300 words or less).

NOTE: Throughout the Capstone project the student must maintain regular contact with his or her faculty supervisor, provide drafts of work as requested, and meet predetermined deadlines.

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Return form to: Andrew Brusletten [abrusletten@uwb.edu](mailto:abrusletten@uwb.edu)

## APPENDIX C

### Human Subjects Review Criteria

The NIH defines “research” as “a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities which meet this definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program which is considered research for other purposes. For example, some demonstration and service programs may include research activities.”

Capstone Projects must meet Human Subjects Review approval if:

- 1) Information from individuals is collected via surveys, administrative data, observation, or other means.

AND

- 2) The results of the study will be disseminated via the media or other means beyond the client organization and the Policy Studies community (faculty, students, and others participating in the course or in presentations of degree projects).

**Capstone Projects are NOT subject to HSR approval if:**

- 1) No information about individuals is collected
  - 2) The project is being conducted ONLY for distribution to a client organization (and the individuals studied are employees, clients, or other members of that organization)
  - 3) The work will not be disseminated beyond the client organization and the Policy Studies community
- The student is responsible for checking with his or her faculty supervisor or course instructor PRIOR to beginning collection of any data.
  - The faculty supervisor or course instructor is responsible for guiding student in a timely way and checking with HSR if there are questions on applicability of this process.
  - If in the course of a project, dissemination of the research becomes likely, the student and instructor are both responsible for immediately beginning the HSR application process.

**If a student chooses to submit his or her project for Human Subjects Review screening, the information on the following pages will be relevant.**

### **Human Subjects Division Contact Information:**

Phone: (206) 543-0098

Email -- [hsd@u.washington.edu](mailto:hsd@u.washington.edu)

Web Site: <http://www.washington.edu/research/hsd/index.php>

### **Institutional Review process (Student research):**

The application will be reviewed by the department for departmental approval and then forwarded to the Human Subjects office for the appropriate committee review. Review time varies; allow a minimum of 8 weeks for review and be prepared to offer additional information. Study procedures may not begin until notice of approval has been received from Human Subjects Division.

### **Initial Screening**

Students will submit proposals to their Capstone Supervisor, who will be responsible for an initial review and a recommendation as to the appropriate review procedure. Once the Instructor has signed the form, the appropriate number of copies should be forwarded to the IAS Graduate Office. The IAS Graduate Office will submit your HSR application.

#### **A. Exempt Review**

The student is required to complete the "Certificate of Exemption" form and submit three (3) copies with all appropriate attachments (proposal, protocol, consent forms or request for waiver of consent) and signatures to the IAS Graduate Office. The application will be reviewed by the department, then forwarded to the Human Subjects office for administrative review. Study procedures may not begin until notice of approval has been received from Human Subjects Division. If the application is complete, and meets requirements for exempt review the process should take 2-3 weeks, but often the reviewers will require additional information, which could cause delays.

Please note that the cover sheet of the Human Subjects Application (Form 13-11) and the Certification of Exemption form requires the signature of your instructor as well as the signature of the program director.

#### **B. Institutional Review – Minimal Risk**

Some research procedures require UW institutional review using the Human Subjects Application (Form 13-11)

Please submit 3 copies of Form 13-11 for research projects that require "**minimal risk**" review. Examples of procedures that qualify for "minimal risk" review are: 1) interviewing children for the sole purpose of research, 2) using secondary data that are linked to the subjects' identities, or 3) conducting focus groups. The content of questionnaires, surveys, or interviews should not be sensitive (content should not stigmatize the subjects if the data found an unintended audience).

#### **C. Institutional Review – Full Review**

Please submit 9 copies of Form 13-11 for research projects that require a **full committee review**.

Examples that need full committee review are: 1) conducting interviews or surveys linked to the subjects' identities that could potentially stigmatize the subjects if the data found an unintended audience, 2) collecting primary data on vulnerable subject populations, like prisoners or people who are cognitively impaired, or 3) collecting primary data that are sensitive and are linked to the subjects identities, such as alcohol abuse, sexual practices, or any illegal activity.

Please attach all study instruments to the Human Subjects application (for example, questionnaires, surveys, or interview protocols). In addition, please attach the appropriate consent forms and assent forms. You should also attach a letter of cooperation from each agency or institution where you will conduct study procedures (or state in section VII.D.5. that the letter of cooperation is pending).

Please note that the cover sheet of the Human Subjects Application (Form 13-11) requires the signature of your instructor as well as the signature of the program director.