Capstone Project Guidelines
M.A. in Communication with Concentration in Health Communication

The information contained in this guide is intended to supplement the information presented in the general regulations of the University of Ottawa. Important information can also be found here: https://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/students/theses. Please note that the information related to the thesis, research paper, and Capstone Project may change at any time.

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Capstone Definition

The word capstone is sometimes used to describe a person's greatest achievement. In an educational setting, it refers to a culminating experience at the end of a course or program that integrates learning from the entire program (Wagenaar, 1993).

M.A. in Communication with Concentration in Health Communication Capstone

The Capstone Project (CMN6998b) is a three-credit course that students must complete at the end of the program. It is preferable that students complete at least one mandatory course in health communication (3 credits) before registering for the capstone (e.g., Health Communication Theories or the Health Communication and Digital Health Seminars).

The capstone allows students to apply their newly acquired competencies and knowledge in the context of a practical and professional problem in health communication. Through their project, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise and prepare to apply this expertise in a professional context.

Your Capstone Project can include:

- A case study,
- An analysis of policies or guidelines,
- An analysis of a communication strategy,
- A review or analysis of a specific project or initiative,
- Etc.

Capstone Project Supervision

Your capstone supervisor must be a University of Ottawa professor with expertise in health communication. Your supervisor may be a professor in the Department of Communication or a professor from the Faculty of Health Sciences (after approval of the Graduate Studies Committee).

Capstone Project Evaluation

Each project will be evaluated by a professor from the Department of Communication or from the Faculty of Health Sciences who did not supervise the project. The project will be awarded a final grade of either Satisfactory (S) or Not Satisfactory (NS).

Structure and Content of the Capstone Summary Paper

Since the Capstone Project scope will be unique for each project, the deliverables and work required to complete it will be different for each student. Regardless of the deliverables specific to the project, the capstone summary report will follow a research paper format and cover the areas listed below. You may consult the Department of Communication's **Guide for Preparing a Proposal, Thesis, or Research Paper** for guidance. You and your supervisor will determine the exact format and length of your project.

1. Introduction

The introduction sets the context for your capstone and describes the problem or situation you intend to study. You must describe the organization or the case study, provide an overview of the problem or issue, and explain how you intend to study or address the problem through your capstone work.

2. Literature Review

This section provides a synthesis that organizes and critically evaluates the existing literature in the area. Through this review, you should seek to compare and contrast the work of various authors to show not only what you found, but also how the various authors differ or are in agreement with respect to the area you are studying.

3. Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

You will need to situate your capstone within one (or more) communication theories or schools of thought. This section should provide an overview of the theory that guides your project and illustrate how your work is situated within that theoretical framework.

4. Methodology

In this section, you will detail the methodology you followed, along with the appropriate references that justify your approach and decisions. Someone reading your report should be able to replicate whichever methodology you used. As such, it is important to provide appropriate detail, including any instruments (i.e., surveys, interview guides, communication tools, etc.) in your appendices.

5. Results/Discussion

This section will provide a detailed outline of what you found through your research. It will also include a discussion section where you interpret the results and discuss the implications for the problem your capstone project aimed to address. The results should be interpreted and situated within the existing knowledge in the field.

6. Recommendations/Deliverables

Capstones provide the opportunity to make a positive contribution in the field of applied health communication. It is important to consider what contribution you wish to make and what your deliverable (what you offer the community with your finished work) will be. Your deliverable could be one of many things: a communication strategy, new web site content, new prototype of digital health technology, an updated policy or training program, a handbook, etc. Having a clear deliverable gives your capstone project a sense of purpose, provides direction, and helps you stay focused on your goal.

7. Style

Please use the APA referencing style in completing any written portions of your capstone summary paper. Any deliverables (e.g., communication tools, web sites, videos) should be developed with the audience(s) in mind, using a style that is generally accepted for such items.

Steps to Completing the Capstone Project:

1. Select a problem/idea/issue for your Capstone Project.
2. Research the problem/idea/issue. Review articles, research, books on the topic.
3. Meet with one or more faculty members to discuss your ideas and get feedback.
4. Select a faculty member as your supervisor.
5. Provide a brief summary of the project to your supervisor along with a draft timeline for completion of the project.
6. Create a service request in uoZone for your project to identify your topic and your supervisor.
7. Once you have approval to proceed from your supervisor, as well as approvals from the relevant Research Ethics Committee(s), you may begin work on your capstone project.
8. Touch base with your supervisor on a regular basis (e.g., at least once a month) to provide an update on the progress of your capstone project.
9. Write a summary report of your Capstone Project work.
10. Present the report for evaluation.

References

Lee, N., & Loton, D. (2015). *Capstone curriculum across disciplines: Synthesising theory, practice and policy to provide practical tools for curriculum design*. Project Report. Office for Learning and Teaching, Sydney, NSW. http://vuir.vu.edu.au/36309/

Wagenaar, T. (1993). The Capstone Course. *Teaching Sociology*, *21*(3), 209-214. https://doi.org/10.2307/1319011