MGMT 797 Capstone Guide

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KELLY DUGGAN

CHRISTIAN LAGARDE

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



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Contents

Introduction 1

About the Author - Kelly Duggan 3

Acknowledgements iv

Paying it Forward: Advice From Past Students v

Main Body

Chapter 1. Project Concept and Objectives 13

Chapter 2. Refining Your Project Purpose and Outcomes 15

Chapter 3. Exploring and Analyzing Resources 17

Chapter 4. Finalizing Your Project Analysis 18

Chapter 5. Building Your Project Design Outline 19

Chapter 6. Building Content and an Implementation Plan 20

Chapter 7. Developing an Evaluation Plan 22

Chapter 8. Finalizing Your Capstone Project and Reflection 24

"Believe you can and you're halfway there." –*Theodore Roosevelt, U.S. President*

Welcome to our capstone course! What do you think of when you hear the word "CAPSTONE"? For many of us, we picture something sitting on top of a significant structure. Some of us may think of something ending. For our purposes, we are going to see our capstone as the synthesis of academic and professional experiences that will culminate into a project that incorporates our learning, skills and established managerial best practices.

Our Management Integrative Capstone will provide an opportunity to **reflect** on what you've learned from your CPS at UNH major as a whole. How will all of the courses you take for your major form a body of knowledge you can use to advance **your personal and professional goals**? Our integrative capstone course has been designed to provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate to yourself and others that you can communicate clearly, think critically, and **apply knowledge to real world questions or problems**. Prior capstone students have actually had integrative capstone projects adopted by their employers!

Our course aims to fulfill the vision as stated in the **MGMT797 course description**: *This capstone course builds on all previous work in both the applied studies foundation and business management. Students synthesize their knowledge of an applied field and management theory to develop and implement effective managerial strategies in their own field of professional interest by completing a course project. Students explore current research in the field of management to meet their personal professional goals and goals of their organizations.*

To achieve this vision, the course is designed to meet the following **learning outcomes**:

1. Identify and use current research and resources in management to meet personal professional goals and goals of their organizations.
2. Combine knowledge of best practices in an applied field and management theory in an area of professional interest by completing a course project.
3. Evaluate the nature and application of ethical principles in the creation and execution of a management capstone project.
4. Assess individual strengths and plan for ongoing professional development as managers.
5. Follow CPS at UNH policy that all research activities which involve human participants, regardless of the level of risk foreseen, require review and written approval by the College's Institutional Review Board prior to the initiation of the activity.

So, as we move into our capstone work I hope you're thinking about a project that excites you and will enable you to integrate your learning with your experience to fulfill this culminating course experience! To help get you started, several past student projects have been included for reference in our course shell (with their permission, of course), as well as a chapter in this OER called "Pay It Forward" which includes advice from prior students for positioning yourself for success.

For reference purposes, there is no hard and fast rule to the expected capstone project length, but as this document serves as the primary assignment for this course, your final paper should be approximately 15 – 20 pages. The format for the finalized project will be as follows:

Section I Introduction

The introduction should identify the focus of your project and explain the relevance to your major and connections with your applied field of studies that you have built upon in your degree. Are you submitting to a supervisor, a board? Be sure to identify your intended audience.

Section II Project Outcomes

List your project outcomes that you developed in the Project Analysis phase of your work.

Section III Literature Review

Present your literature review noting best practices in the field, as well as the conclusions you've drawn from the literature review.

Section IV Project Content

Describe your project and include all materials associated with it so that the reader develops a good sense of what the project entails. Show your implementation and evaluation plans.

Section V Conclusions and Reflection

Appendix This section will contain any supplementary information and/or supporting documentation.

So, congratulations on getting to this point in your academic career. Best wishes for a successful journey toward degree completion!

– *Prof. Christian Lagarde*

Kelly Duggan, M.S.



Kelly relocated to New Hampshire from the Boston area in 2004, she has 25+ years of management experience and has owned a successful small business for many years. She earned her master's degree in management from Lesley College in Cambridge, MA and her bachelor's degree in industrial technology/manufacturing engineering from the University of Lowell. Kelly has been teaching college-level capstone, management, leadership, marketing, business communications, strategic analysis, and general business courses since 2008.

Being extremely enthusiastic about business management, growth and development Kelly finds that her true passion lies in exploring these concepts with a diverse audience of learners. Her goal is to create a teaching and learning environment where ideas are shared and theories are applied to business situations. Kelly embraces the opportunity to collaboratively support students as they further develop their appreciation for effective business, management, and leadership skills.

When she's not teaching or managing her business, Kelly enjoys motorcycle and ATV rides through New Hampshire's beautiful Lakes Region and spending time with her family, friends and boxer, Duke.

Cover image attribution: "Person standing on top of snow covered mountain" by Aishath Naj on Unsplash.com. CC0 Public Domain.

As I work to continuously improve and refine this Pressbook, I can't help but think of the people in my teaching career who have given me the support and encouragement to put together a resource like this. I don't think I ever would have had the courage to teach my first college class without the guidance and support of my teaching role model, Prof. Fred King. Also, I know I never would have undertaken a project like this Pressbook without the encouragement of Julie Moser, EdD. Both of these people continue to inspire me through their work and their ability to bring out the best in each day and each student. I am eternally grateful to you both for your mentoring and your friendship.

Also, I'd like to express my appreciation for all of the students with whom I've had the privilege to work over the years. You've each given me the opportunity to do what brings me the greatest joy in my career – **TEACH!**

-Prof. Kelly Duggan, M.S.

"It takes each of us to make a difference for all of us." — *Jackie Mutcheson, Teacher*

Each term, students are asked to voluntarily offer a piece of advice or insight for students beginning their Integrative Management Capstone journey. They understand that their advice and insights will be shared anonymously with future students and that this is their opportunity to "pay it forward". The goal is that you learn from your peers' experiences and that their hindsight can become your foresight. **You'll see that some points are repeated; that's because they were shared by multiple students.**

Here is what has been accumulated for your consideration:

- Don't wait until the last minute to pull everything together. Even if you think you have plenty of time, the project has so many moving parts that it's easy to underestimate how long it'll take. Break it into smaller chunks with your own personal deadlines, and leave space for feedback and edits. It makes the final stretch so much less stressful.
- Start early, and don't wait until you feel "ready" to begin writing. The clarity comes *through* the process, not before it. Break the project into small, manageable pieces and commit to steady progress each week. Also, don't be afraid to reach out to your instructor with questions—she genuinely wants you to succeed and can help you stay on track.
- Prioritize working consistently throughout the course on your capstone project. Every bit you do in the first few weeks will help you as you put your final project together. I would encourage you to be disciplined and try your best to achieve the goals you set for yourself each week.
- Organization, discipline and consistency are key! Stay organized, play to your strengths, and seek constant feedback!
- Set realistic goals for each day week to week of this course, it's so much more manageable!
- Aim to do the work on the first day it is released, versus focusing on the due date.
- Don't wait for it to feel perfect before you begin writing – just start. You'll revise and improve as you go.
- Don't underestimate how helpful your past assignments and notes will be. Pulling from earlier courses, modules, and discussions gave me a huge head start and saved me a ton of time.
- Select a capstone topic that genuinely interests you because researching a topic you love will make the research and writing process more enjoyable.
- Start strong and pace yourself. The capstone isn't something you can cram into a few days; it's a gradual build. Treat each week like a "mini project" and aim to finish your deliverables a few days early so you have time to review and reflect.
- Be organized by creating a folder and save all your work in one safe location.
- Pick a topic you are passionate about.
- Just start. No matter how unsure of where your project will take you, just start and let it take you on a journey.
- It is easy to become overwhelmed with the amount of notes and research needed to stay on track; having everything organized in one location is certainly key.
- Start thinking about your topic before the course even starts. Think about it for many days before picking your topic. Pick something you are passionate about!

- Start your work early in the week. Starting the weekly assignments early in the week allows you to think deeper into your specific topic, so when it comes time to do the discussion forums, project outline, or project analysis you have a good baseline started and know what you need to work on. I found that this also helped me balance my work life, family, and school efficiently.
- Pick a topic that is really means something to you – a topic that will benefit the greater population, whether it is at your place of employment or elsewhere. If it means that much to you and will affect others positively, you will put the necessary time and effort into this project that it deserves. Stay focused, keep plugging along each week, break

it down into manageable sections, and never give up. You will get through it just fine.

- **Don't give up, it's worth it!**
- Plan ahead – You never know what is going to unexpectedly come up so plan to complete your assignments in advance of the due date.
- Utilize all of your resources – Review your previous core course textbooks as they contain some great information that could be used to support your project. Bounce ideas off of people around you. Sometimes just talking through something will get you through a roadblock or clarify your thoughts to move forward.
- Don't panic or get overwhelmed! Take it one week at a time and once you get into the groove, everything will fall into place.
- Pick a subject that is meaningful to you. That will make the work easier and more enjoyable. Most of all, use your time wisely.
- Don't give up – it's a fast 12 weeks!
- From the first day of class work to find a topic quickly.
- Use CPS at UNH's resources to proofread and review your capstone.
- Focus your efforts on a concept that will really aid you in your professional development and better your respective field.
- Set a time schedule and stick to it.
- What is important is that you pick something that you are passionate about and something you think you can make a difference with – that way the project is more fun and beneficial than it is work.
- Focus on your goals and don't let anything get in the way.
- Do your project on something you are passionate about and can easily write about. Have a good research plan and work on it early and often.
- Find a topic that you are passionate about and one that will help push you forward in your career. This will keep you interested and motivated throughout the course. Make sure to start early and be consistent with researching and finding information that will support your objectives.
- Pick a topic you are passionate about because it makes the work more enjoyable. Enjoying this project will help you stick to the timeline/goals that you set for yourself which is imperative for success.
- Spend the extra time to choose a topic that will have an impact and that is of interest to you, the writer.
- Follow the process and the schedule each week. Do not get behind and, if possible, try to get ahead.
- Use the example papers, they are a great tool.
- Utilize the information you share with each other through the discussion forums. Someone will always see something differently than you and that perspective can give you new insight into something you never thought of. Learn from each other!!!
- Fully develop your project objectives and concepts early on so you can use key terms to further your research.
- Stay consistent with completing the various stages of the project by the specified deadlines. Doing this makes for a relatively smooth process and keeps your project organized as it builds.
- Limit the scope of your project. You only have 12 weeks to work through this process, so a manageable focus is key.
- Think of what your passion is and try to incorporate that into your project. I believe that is the most important first step otherwise you won't be as engaged.
- Work hard; challenge yourself to work on your project a little bit every day.
- Work hard and play hard. Compartmentalize your time so you don't get burned out, schedule time for schoolwork, work, and family. Don't compromise your time with family over schoolwork, or work work…
- Find a problem that is impacting your workplace and establish a way to solve it.
- Allow enough time for research and data organization.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to choose a goal that you've seriously considered, and make it your capstone project.
- Brainstorm capstone ideas with your manager.
- Let the process happen and keep the project yours.

- Do not procrastinate and complete the assignments step by step each week.
- Plan out your project timeline ahead of time and plan for weeks where you might not always stay on track so that you can finish on time.
- Make a good outline to follow – this will really help in developing your project/paper.
- Manage your time! I found that as we have worked through the course timeline of twelve weeks those small weekly hours of dedicated time add up to make a lengthy project more manageable.
- Thoroughly review the syllabus, have an awareness of what the course is about and don't stress about the final project. The project will come together if you take it one step at a time. Put one foot in front of the other and soon you will be walking out the door with your degree!
- Work through the capstone process as it is designed to maximize your success.
- Create a plan week one. Find a topic and go with it, start planning every week and how you can be the most time efficient. This work is not hard, but it is time consuming because we are essentially showcasing all that we have learned over the course of our Bachelor's degree.
- Do not procrastinate and stay a day or two ahead of where you think you should be, but be patient at the same time and do not rush ahead because that will be inefficient, as there is critical information that will be forthcoming for the assignments that will save you time. It took me a couple weeks to figure this out, but once I did, it allowed me to not feel as overwhelmed and reduced my stress level with class.
- Stay on top of the weekly steps to move forward on the project so that you can enjoy the last few weeks of school. I also recommend setting aside time specifically for work on the project; life gets crazy, but making a point of prioritizing staying on course is really helpful. Don't procrastinate!
- Stay on schedule. The course is set up to keep you on track, but we all know how life is sometimes, and our schedules don't always align. But staying on track will really help you focus and minimize stress during the writing portion.
- Trust the process, and do not think that this is a paper you can procrastinate on and just whip up near the end of the course. It is an absolute necessity to do this one piece at a time, have time to reflect on what you have, and rework it if need be. It can be overwhelming at first, and you may need to rethink your initial concept. Allowing time to vet each piece and think about how you apply your experience and knowledge gained throughout school into your capstone project takes time.
- Be patient with the process, stick to your guide and timelines, and document your research content in an organized manner.
- Focus on a topic area you are passionate about; research it in week #1 to make sure you have enough information and sources to turn it into a more in-depth capstone project.
- Organize an assignment timeframe system that works best for you. Develop your work each week based on the module content.
- Consider this capstone process to be a marathon, not a sprint.
- Embrace the iterative process. Research is not a linear path; it's a journey of exploration and refinement. Don't be afraid to revisit, revise, and reassess. Each iteration is a step closer to clarity and excellence. Also, maintain a symbiotic relationship with your project – let it guide you, but also, assert your understanding. Your unique perspective is the magic ingredient that transforms data into meaningful insights.
- Spend quality time on the "smaller" assignments, as this time is a good investment towards the overall project.
- Ensure you put in proper time and effort. This is not a difficult project to achieve, as long as you make clear commitments and implement time management strategies.
- **DON'T PROCRASTINATE!**
- Save your work to an external flash drive JUST IN CASE!
- **Take full advantage of meeting/touching base with your instructor.**
- Keep an open mind to continuing your learning beyond your degree program.
- Don't Wait – complete assignments before the deadlines when you can. First, because you have no idea what life can throw at you every week, but also because it allows having better discussions with your classmates when those

opportunities are available.

- During class discussions, respond to different classmates every week. And it doesn't hurt to do more if the instruction is to reply to 2 classmates, then you should respond to three – it benefits the entire class.
- Get a majority of your work done early in the week. Do not wait until the weekend or Thursday to make your first post.
- Connect with the professor, they are a great resource to help you with your project!
- Allow yourself to access as much literature as possible. By expanding the number of legitimate resources you reference, you can gain important insights you may not have discovered otherwise.
- Consistently reference the learning outcomes while developing your project.
- Don't take constructive feedback lightly and know that there is always room for more improvements.
- Take advantage of the submission reports. They are there to hold yourself accountable and focus on the path ahead. It is also a tool for reflection. It is the diary for your journey!
- **Be kind to yourself.** This is a fluid project – you may doubt your ideas, or your progress but keep going!
- Use your resources: Zoom meetings with the instructor and reach out to your peers.
- Stay on top of dates don't procrastinate, even though the timeline seems long.
- **Don't give up on yourself!**
- Start as soon as you can, work through each section bit by bit, and trust that your project will improve as you move forward. Be willing to accept advice.
- Work on your project every week. It will help you to not feel overwhelmed and ensure that your paper is everything that you want it to be.
- Pick a project you are passionate about; something you really want to explore more, but already have somewhat of an understanding of. This will help you develop a project that you can stay focused on and keep you motivated.
- It's extremely important to stay organized, pace yourself, and trust the process.
- **Start early, stay consistent, and don't be afraid to ask questions.** To make the project process less stressful and smoother, focus on setting weekly objectives. Crucially, don't just acknowledge your instructor's feedback, actively apply it. The most important factor, however, is choosing a project you genuinely care about. Your passion for the topic will make the work more meaningful, the research more engaging, and ultimately, you'll be proud of the final result.
- Keep up on the deadlines. It gets hard at the end of your degree, and you want to be done, but keep pushing!
- Create a project timeline early. Plan to work on specific sections (such as the introduction, project outcomes, objectives, literature review, and conclusion) week by week. This prevents the work from pilling up and keeps you from feeling overwhelmed as the due date approaches.
- Don't hesitate to reach out to the professor. If you are unsure whether you are interpreting an objective correctly or just need to talk through an idea, having that conversation can give you clarity and direction. This was extremely helpful for me when I felt stuck or needed reassurance that I was on the right path.
- Be diligent, consistent and organized with planning your week. Ensure that you have designated time during the week to complete the assignments.
- ***Be confident. Breathe.* YOU GOT THIS!**

SAMPLE PROJECTS

To give you an idea of the types of capstone project previous students have produced, here are some examples:

Mentoring Empowerment Program

Create a 1:1 mentoring program to help those with mental illness and brain disorders maintain relationships and employment. The program aims to help increase self-esteem, provide encouragement, improve communication with management, and inspire participants to explore employment as a means for self-actualization.

Food Truck Business Plan

Develop a business plan for launching a Filipino food truck business. The focus of this project is to guide potential restaurant entrepreneurs and fellow college students who may want to break into the food truck industry.

Hiring Program

Develop an organizational hiring program to maximize retention and establish a consistent, fair, and transparent hiring program that will provide equal opportunity for all current and potential employees. Develop mission and values statements, refine job descriptions, establish hiring panels, interview guidelines, and hiring process and procedure.

Fire Fighter Mentoring Program

Create mentor relationships between seasoned fire officers and firefighters interested in the position of fire officer. The mentor assigns tasks to the firefighter throughout different phases of the program. Assignments are based on the kinds of tasks they would complete as a fire officer with the goal of helping them understand the position before taking on the role officially.

Fire Fighter Team Expansion

This project puts forth the information that is needed to understand the opportunities and challenges that occur when adding new firefighter positions to an already established fire department.

Process Improvement Within Campus Services

This project focuses on process improvement as a means of continuously meeting stakeholder expectations.

Samples of these and other projects are included in the **Course Resources** section of our Canvas course for reference purposes only. You are encouraged to review these samples to help you develop your own vision for your capstone project as well as gain an understanding of how the completed project will come together. Past students have given their permission for their work to be shared to help future students maximize their success with the capstone process.

MAIN BODY

Ch. 1 "Ideas won't keep. Something must be done about them." – *Alfred North Whitehead, Mathematician and Philosopher*

Many of you have come into this capstone course knowing what you would like to focus on for your project concept and the objectives you would like your project work to accomplish. Others may still be giving this some thought. To that end, here is some guidance to help you to start formulating an initial project concept and associated objectives. Rest assured, your concept and objects may become more refined as you move through our process.

The first step in formulating your project is to start brainstorming. As Jeff M. Miller describes in his article **"7 Tips to Help You Gain a New Perspective"**, brainstorming allows us the freedom to take on a new perspective and spontaneously develop a list of ideas with the intention of forming a conclusion. In this case, the conclusions would be your project concept and associated objectives.

So, here are a few questions to start brainstorming. Remember, brainstorming is a tool utilized to "get your creative juices flowing", so don't be afraid to let your imagination wander. Utilizing phrases such as "what if _____ were possible" and "if only I could do _____ to improve my work situation" and "I've always wanted to _____" are great ways to begin.

The following questions will provide some guidance to get things rolling:

1. **Have you dreamed of opening your own business one day?** If so, you may consider developing a business plan as your capstone project. **The Small Business Administration** provides excellent resources to help you develop objectives such as:

   - Formulating a solid marketing plan
   - Forecasting costs and profit projections
   - Establishing a marketing plan, etc.

2. **Do you have an organizational challenge within your workplace?** Is employee retention an issue, for example? If so, maybe you need to look at areas for improvement to increase employee retention. George Dickson provides some good food for thought in his blog article **"10 Dead Simple Ways to Improve Your Company Culture"**. The objectives of this project concept might include:

   - Developing consistent hiring procedures and processes
   - Developing a comprehensive employee orientation and onboarding process
   - Instituting employee training opportunities
   - Implementing consistent review practices and procedures

3. **Do you have a process in your workplace that needs improvement to maximize the quality of a deliverable?** For example, is your customer service all that it could be? If not, maybe you could look at establishing a formalized customer service plan. The objectives of this project work may include:

   - Developing a customer service manual
   - Improved levels of customer satisfaction
   - Increased sales to repeat customers
   - More customer referrals
   - Higher profit margins

Steve Jobs provides excellent insights around **continuous improvement** in the following YouTube video:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:
https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/mgmt797/?p=23#oembed-1

Sometimes it helps to **think about the end results** you are hoping to achieve (the objectives) and work backwards to develop your project concept. Using the examples above, that might look something like this:

1. How can we increase customer satisfaction and referrals to improve sales? Are we delivering consistent, high level customer service? What could help with that?

    - Establishing a formalized customer service plan
    - Developing a customer service manual

Other broad ideas would include: Have you considered establishing a non-profit charity? Developing a public media campaign? Launching a podcast? Planning and executing an educational workshop?

If you would like to **have a discussion and brainstorm** some avenues together, I'm happy to do this. Simply send me an email with your thoughts around potential project concepts and rough objectives and we can schedule a zoom session or a telephone conversation to help refine your focus.

Ch. 2 "Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success." —*Pablo Picasso, Painter*

This week's work brings us down the path of the Project Analysis phase of our work. The beginning purpose of the project analysis is to clarify our project purpose, goals and outcomes (the objectives) and use those key components to refine our project concept. In his article **"10 Smart Goals Examples for Small Businesses in 2020"**, Patrick Proctor provides some SMART goals examples to illustrate how learning to implement these types of targets can lead to long-term success.

When we think about sharpening our project objectives, it is important to know what constitutes a well written objective. An objective is a statement that clearly describes an anticipated outcome *that is observable, measurable* and *can be achieved within a reasonable time.*

Some examples of objectives might include:

1. Increased efficiency
2. Higher productivity
3. Improved customer experience
4. Expanded revenue streams
5. Decreased employee turnover
6. Reduced waste

Why are objectives important to our capstone project? While having a concept or idea around "growing our customer base" or "employee retention" or "starting a business" sound wonderful, giving ourselves reasonable goals that we can measure and evaluate make our project concepts powerful.

Some capstone projects may be focused on developing something new, such as a new business or a leadership training program within your organization. In these instances, your project objectives might include:

1. Establishing the formation of your business entity
2. Preparing a location analysis for your new business
3. Strategizing a marketing plan to launch and maintain your business presence
4. Forecasting profitability estimates for the business

Or, in the case of developing a leadership training program, your objectives may include:

1. Identifying the key components of a consistent leadership training program
2. Establishing the criteria for participation in the program
3. Formulating a survey for measuring satisfaction with the program from both participant and team member perspectives
4. Developing continuing education opportunities after the initial program roll-out

To come at this from a different angle, your project concept might be to plan a conference to be held at your organization which would bring your subcontractors together for a day of collaboration, sharing of ideas, and education around cutting edge industry developments. In this case, your project objectives might include:

1. Outline the logistical components for the venue including parking, room layout and seating, signage, technological needs, etc.

2. Identify the keynote speaker
3. Collaborate with team members to establish 2 to 3 additional presentation topics and presenters of interest
4. Gather pricing for catering, floral arrangements, giveaways
5. Establish a budget for the event
6. Establish the invite list

As you begin to draft your project analysis, you will want to start articulating your project purpose and objectives clearly as this will help to refine the focus of your research into best practices.

In his TedTalk "Four Keys for Setting and Achieving Goals", William Barr gives us great food for thought:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/mgmt797/?p=25#oembed-1

Ch. 3 "Research is creating new knowledge." *-Neil Armstrong, Astronaut*

To effectively meet the goals of your capstone project, it is important that you research best practices and published resources that support your project objectives. In other words, you'll need to embark on a discovery process to uncover what is currently being put into practice in industry that relates to your project purpose, as well as published work that helps to reinforce your project goals and objectives. As you review the past students' capstone projects in our course, you can gain a firsthand understanding of the value that a solid literature review provides to your capstone work.

For example, if your project purpose is to develop a leadership training program for your organization, it would be critical to know what types of leadership skills are effective for organizational success and what leadership theories apply to your project objectives. In this case you would perform a thorough research process of articles, textbooks, peer reviewed published resources, etc. to gain a thorough insight and understanding of the current state of knowledge around the topic of leadership. This will help you develop your theoretical framework and provide an overview of key findings and areas of debate around, in this example, leadership. The literature review shows your reader how your work relates to and incorporates existing research and what new insights you can conclude from your research as they relate to your project objectives.

The American University in Washington, D.C. provides a **Literature Review Tutorial** that illustrates the importance of a literature review as it relates to your project work. *You will want to be sure to click on the tabs at the top to navigate through all of the pages of the guide.*

The **CPS at UNH Research Guide** is also a helpful resource for this portion of your work. If you need further assistance, you are encouraged to contact the CPS at UNH Librarian at gsc.library@granite.edu for direct one-on-one help. Our Librarian is an amazing resource who can help you research useful sources for your literature review.

Ch. 4 "The ultimate authority must always rest with the individual's own reason and critical analysis" *-Dalai Lama, Spiritual Leader*

When finalizing your analysis, you'll be refining your project description and objectives, and identifying and using current research and resources in management to support the design and development of your course project. At this point in your work, you'll want to be sure you've included all of the following:

1. An introduction/overview containing a clear articulation of your project focus. Identify the relevance that this work has to your academic and professional development, as well as the intended audience for this project work.
2. Your project objectives/outcomes. Now that you have refined the focus of your project work and conducted your research, what are your goals/objectives/expected outcomes for this project work?
3. A thorough literature review and analysis of findings to illustrate background, managerial theory, and best practices as they related to your topic.
4. Identification of any learner skills required to complete the project. Will you need to develop any new skills in order to complete this project? For example, if your project focuses on creating a database to increase the efficient storage and search functionality of client contact information for your organization, would you need to learn how to use the proposed database software?

Again, this is a good time to refer forward to the sections of your completed project in its entirety. As you can see, the various sections of your finalized project analysis will be part of your completed project (see sections I, II and III).

Capstone Project Format

Section I Introduction

The introduction should identify the focus of your project and explain the relevance to your major and connections with your applied field of studies that you have built upon in your degree. Are you submitting to a supervisor, a board? Be sure to identify your intended audience.

Section II Project Outcomes

List your project outcomes that you developed in the Project Analysis phase of your work.

Section III Literature Review

Present your literature review noting best practices in the field as they relate to your project as well as the conclusions you've drawn from the literature review.

Section IV Project Content

Describe your project and include all materials associated with it so that the reader develops a good sense of what the project entails. Show your implementation and evaluation plans.

Section V Conclusions and Reflection

Appendix This section will contain any supplementary information.

Ch. 5 "Organizing is a journey, not a destination." – *Anonymous*

When conceptualizing and developing your capstone project design outline, you will be exploring your project components, structuring your outline format and establishing the scaffolding for how the objectives of your concept will be met in your finalized project.

Your project design outline will serve as a planning tool as you move forward with your project work. It will establish a path for managing your project successfully so that you are efficient with your time and effective with your efforts.

At this point, you have a solid project concept, comprehensive project objectives, and relevant resources that you have reviewed. While this is extremely important information, the key to a successful capstone project is putting it all together in a useful, professionally presented manner. This is where a project design outline comes in. I like to think of the project design outline as the framework of a house or the scaffolding of a skyscraper. When you frame out a house, you bring the one-dimensional blueprints to three-dimensional life. You establish the physical framework for where the kitchen will be, you erect walls to indicate where each bedroom will be, and you structure the roof so that everything is solidly connected. This is similar to what the outline of your project will do for your finalized project. It will provide an outlined structure for how your project intends to achieve each of the objectives you have established, and your literature review will inform the best practices that you will apply.

First, you will want to establish your purpose. Why are you completing this project? **Secondly**, you will want to establish your intended audience. Who will ultimately be reading your capstone project? While your first audience may be your capstone course instructor, you may eventually plan on presenting your work to a manager within your organization. **Thirdly**, you will want to break out individual objectives and identify the following for each of them:

1. The tasks that you must complete to meet this objective
2. The application of best practices as they relate to this objective and
3. The resources or operational components of the objective

Fourthly, you will be designing a simple timeline which illustrates a date by which each objective should be completed. For those of you preparing your capstone for roll-out in your workplace, your project implementation and evaluation will continue beyond the end date of our course, so many of your dates will be outside the borders of our 10- or 12-week timeframe, which is perfectly fine. For those of you researching a managerial topic such as effective leadership styles, a simple timeline or schedule showing when you will complete each section of your capstone project is sufficient. This section is a mechanism for keeping you on track. Without scheduled deadlines, it is easy to procrastinate. A schedule helps you to identify priorities and keeps you on a clear path to meeting your goals. To read more about the advantages of timelines, read Max Palmer's article **"What are the Advantages of Scheduling"**.

There are many tools and software programs available to help you organize your thought when designing a project outline. One tool that many past students have found useful in their capstone work is Mind Mapping. You can find a link to a short video and article focused on Mind Mapping as a tool by visiting **MindTools**. Also, to visualize the power of a mind map, view **Sara McGuire's blog** for some samples and templates.

In the Project Resources section of our Canvas course site, you'll find examples of past students' work, some of which include separate files for their project outlines. You'll notice that in the reference outlines, the students have taken their major project objectives and broken them each down into the tasks that must be completed to meet the objective, the application of best practices as they relate to the objective, and the resources needed to achieve the objective. Purdue offers a useful resource around structuring outlines, which can be found by visiting their **website**.

Ch. 6 "Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." –John F. Kennedy, U.S. President

Our next step in our Capstone process is putting it all together! This begins with building on your Project Design Outline to develop your final paper content. This involves utilizing your Project Analysis and Project Design Outline to begin organizing and writing the project content segment of your final project.

You will also be working on another important component of the project: The Implementation Plan. This addresses the important questions: How will you carry out your project work? How will you implement it? Simply put, an implementation plan documents how you will put your solution, business plan, retention plan, etc. into practice.

Often, people within an organization will resist change. While your capstone project may be based on a process improvement, increased efficiencies, improved effectiveness or some other benefit to your department or organization, you may find yourself faced with some resistance to implementing that change. In his TedTalk "5 Ways to Lead in an Era of Constant Change", Jim Hemerling makes a great presentation around positioning your change in a positive manner so that your team or organization embraces the opportunity to implement transformation.



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An important aspect of implementation is to consider each of the stakeholders involved in the process. When developing your project implementation plan, think of each person or department that will be impacted by the change you are proposing and consider how your project solution will affect how they do their work or perform a process. As part of your project content, you will want to describe how to roll out your proposal in a way that creates a win-win situation. By involving others in the process, you will find that they are much more receptive to the idea of change and willing to help implement it successfully. Skillful managers anticipate obstacles and implement change incrementally so as not to overwhelm individuals, teams, or the organization.

Another aspect of implementation, based on the nature of your project, may involve implementing your business plan to establish or grow your own company. As exciting as this may sound, there are many costly steps necessary to establish or grow a business and you want to do this with great care, strategy, and forethought. You may find that implementing your plan to start your own small business will take a year or more to incorporate fully. Or, depending upon your project, you may be launching a new marketing strategy to grow your existing business. This implementation will certainly involve time and money, therefore needs to be planned precisely.

Your project may focus on professional development goals, such as building your leadership knowledge, skills, and capacity. In this case, your content would focus on leadership theories and best practices and your implementation plan would involve how you envision applying your capstone project to your future professional accomplishments. Based on the content you have developed, the lessons you've learned and the best practices you've researched, how do you see your leadership style evolving? How will you implement this into your everyday business practices? For example, given the insights that you have gained, how might you transition your current authoritative style of leadership to a more democratic, coaching style of leading and managing?

A significant part of your implementation plan, whatever the focus, may require resources such as added personnel, capital in the form of funding, equipment, technology, etc. This will be an important factor in your strategy. You're encouraged to give thought to how you will gain access to these resources as you think about deploying your project plan to meet your goals and objectives.

As you can see, whatever your project or motivation might be, a strategic implementation plan will contribute greatly to your individual and ultimately organizational success.

Ch. 7 "If it's worth doing, it's worth measuring." *-Unknown*

Many capstone projects revolve around changes to systems, processes, or strategies. In our previous chapter we discussed the importance of having a well-organized implementation plan as a component of success. But once you have implemented your project work, how will you know how successful it is or, dare it be said, is not? By establishing an evaluation plan that measures the new status in comparison with the previous status. Let's assume, for example, that your project concept involved objectives that included increased employee retention. In this scenario, it would be important to know what your retention rate is at the time of implementation. Also, let's assume that your project research and content contained historic retention data over the past several years. That data might be presented in a table similar to the following:

No. of Employees Jan. 1, 2017	216
No. of Employees Dec. 31, 2017	199
2017 Retention Rate	92.1%
No. of Employees Jan. 1, 2018	199
No. of Employees Dec. 31, 2018	172
2018 Retention Rate	86.4%
Retention Rate Change	-5.7%
No. of Employees Jan. 1, 2019	172
No. of Employees Dec. 31, 2019	189
2019 Retention Rate	110%
Retention Rate Change	+23.6%

If, in this case, you had implemented your project work focused on increasing employee retention in 2018, your evaluation methods would show an increase in retention by 23.6% over the previous year, which would have been a significant success.

Other project objectives in this example may have included requiring a consistent employee orientation plan, developing a formal employee performance review process, and establishing professional development opportunities. Your evaluation plan, in that case, could involve metrics around those significant areas of impact as well.

Often times, in order to measure intangibles – for example, employee satisfaction – we'll incorporate a survey. Surveys are an excellent way to get anonymous (or named) feedback in order to measure the success of a newly implemented program. *Note: If you choose to develop a survey to be used for future evaluation, you will want to include that survey in the appendix section of your capstone project.*

In his Ted Talk, John Doerr talks about the importance of measuring what really matters in relationship to our goals and objectives:



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In conclusion, when you look back at the key objectives of your capstone work, how will you evaluate or measure your results as they pertain to your goals? This approach will be detailed in your evaluation plan.

Ch. 8 "All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them." –*Walt Disney, Animation Industry Pioneer*

As you are working to complete your capstone project, you'll want to remember to use these project sections for your finalized format:

Section I Introduction

The introduction should identify the focus of your project and explain the relevance to your major and connections with your applied field of studies that you have built upon in your degree. Are you submitting to a supervisor, a board? Be sure to identify your intended audience.

Section II Project Outcomes

List your project outcomes that you developed in the Project Analysis phase of your work.

Section III Literature Review

Present your literature review noting best practices in the field, as well as the conclusions you've drawn from the literature review.

Section IV Project Content

Describe your project and include all materials associated with it so that the reader develops a good sense of what the project entails. Show your implementation and evaluation plans.

Section V Conclusions and Reflection

Appendix This section will contain any supplementary information and/or supporting documentation.

At this point in your capstone project work as you are finalizing content, tweaking evaluation plans, and for some of you getting ready to roll out new business plans, it is important to also take time to reflect on all that you have accomplished through your research and your innovative approach to accomplishing your capstone project objectives. Reflection involves engaging with your work in a manner that incorporates your knowledge with your experience and articulating that in a meaningful way.

As you develop your conclusion, consider your process, the lessons you have learned, what went well and what you may have done differently given the opportunity to repeat the process. Consider your capstone project development as a professional development opportunity that you will bring with you into your organization, your career and your approach to personal growth and enrichment.

Reflect on your accomplishments in a manner that brings perspective around achievement, success and continuous improvement. Utilize your critical and strategic thinking skills to analyze how your project work synthesizes your academic journey with your professional goals. Reflection is a powerful tool that helps us to recognize how we'll utilize what we've learned to support our present and future goals and challenge ourselves to be innovative.

In her article, Time to Reflect – Why Does it Matter in the Workplace, Karen Liebenguth educates us on the empowering ability of reflection to help us make better decisions, decide on a course of action and broaden our thinking.

Congratulations on your accomplishments, not only in your capstone work but in completing your journey toward degree completion. As the 50 well-known entrepreneurs share in their advice in the following video, finding work that you are passionate about, that brings you great personal reward and motivates you is priceless. My wish for each of you is that you dedicate yourself to lifelong learning and you recognize great personal and professional success in whatever form brings you the greatest joy!



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