



CAPSTONE HANDBOOK

**Plan A – Thesis
Plan C – Special Project**

Central Connecticut State University

Revised: September 2024

Introduction

The capstone is the signature project of your graduate degree. Whether you are completing a thesis (Plan A) or a special project (Plan C), you are utilizing all your knowledge from your courses to contribute to the collective knowledge within your discipline.

A capstone is **the culminating activity of your graduate degree program**. To complete it successfully, you must demonstrate mastery over both a specific content area and the methodology of your discipline.

A capstone is **an exercise in research**. You are asked to demonstrate your skills in using the methodologies of your field to examine a topic of interest to your discipline.

A capstone **makes an academic contribution to the field**. This can take many forms: a test of a new theory, a reinterpretation of an old poem, an evaluation of a curriculum, or a host of other possibilities.

This Handbook will guide you through the 5 Steps to completing your capstone:

STEP 1: Registering for the Capstone Course

STEP 2: Writing Your Proposal & Getting Research Approvals

STEP 3: Submitting Your Proposal and/or IRB & IACUC Approvals

STEP 4: Completing Department and Graduate Studies Requirements

STEP 5: Submitting Your Capstone

STEP 1: Registering for the Capstone Course

To register for the Capstone Course, you must first complete the Graduate Capstone Course registration form with your Capstone Advisor.

<https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/CapstoneCourseRegistration.pdf>

Please submit the fully signed form electronically to gradstudies@ccsu.edu.

You must be registered in the Graduate Capstone Course in the semester you intend to begin work with your Advisor on the proposal and start your research and writing.

To register for the Capstone Course, you must have at least a 3.00 overall GPA and (prior to starting the course) completed 18 credits for programs with 30-35 credits or 24 credits for programs with 36 or more credits.

STEP 2: Writing Your Proposal & Getting Research Approvals

BEFORE YOU BEGIN RESEARCH BEYOND THE PROPOSAL OR START WRITING YOUR CAPSTONE, you must submit and get approval for your proposal from your Capstone Advisor and committee.

IF APPLICABLE, you must also get approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) **before** you recruit human participants, collect data, or order animals. See IRB/IACUC section below for more information. If you are unsure if your capstone requires IRB/IACUC approvals, check with your Capstone Advisor.

A proposal is, essentially, a written “action plan” of what you intend to do (your topic) and how you intend to do it (your methodology). The proposal must be developed with the advice of your Capstone Advisor.

The Proposal must contain the following sections, although the methodology and limitations sections will necessarily vary by discipline:

- Properly formatted Thesis Proposal Cover Page

See example in the appendix to this document.

- Description of Purpose
- Hypothesis or Research Questions
- Literature review of related research
- Significance of your project
- Description of methodology
- Limitations of the study
- References
- Appendices (if applicable)

The proposal must be submitted in a standard font, size 12, and double-spaced.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Approval

In keeping with university as well as federal standards and regulations, **all research involving human or (live, vertebrate) animal subjects must receive prior approval from the appropriate campus committee:** the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

- **It is important to note that clearance from IRB or IACUC must be given before you begin any data collection.**
- **For studies involving human subjects, IRB approval is required before any recruitment of potential participants can begin.**
- **No animals may be ordered, received, or used until the protocol has been approved.**
- **Students must consult with their Capstone Advisors and review all IRB and IACUC rules, regulations, and procedures:**

<https://www.ccsu.edu/irb>
<https://www.ccsu.edu/iacuc>

These groups function to ensure that appropriate safeguards are used to protect the rights and well-being of research subjects. Before submitting your proposal for review to the IRB or IACUC, your Capstone Advisor needs to review and sign the related forms. Your Capstone Advisor will serve as the Principal Investigator (PI). **This means that your Capstone Advisor, not the student, will be the one who submits the protocol to the IRB or IACUC, indicating your Capstone Advisor's approval of the protocol.**

<https://www.ccsu.edu/irb/initial-submissions>

<https://www.ccsu.edu/institutional-animal-care-and-use-council-iacuc-ccsu/application-process>

In cases where research involving human or animal subjects is being performed at another institution, you must obtain approval from the appropriate review committees at that institution. Copies of those approvals must be attached to the Central forms.

STEP 3: Submitting Your Capstone Proposal

After your Capstone Advisor and committee have approved your Capstone Proposal and forms, you must submit them to Graduate Studies for final review and approval.

Submit the following via email to GradStudies@ccsu.edu:

- PDF of the completed and signed Capstone Proposal Form.
<https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/CapstoneProposal.pdf>
- PDF of a complete and properly formatted Capstone Proposal.
- PDFs of IRB and/or IACUC approvals (if applicable).

You and your Capstone Advisor will receive an email notification once Graduate Studies approves your Proposal.

Important Information: Continuing Registration Course

It is unusual that graduate students can complete the proposal and the capstone in the same semester. Students, however, only register for the Capstone Course one time. Until the capstone is completed and approved, a grade of Incomplete (INC) will appear on the transcript for the Capstone Course.

During fall and spring semesters in which no other course work is taken, matriculated graduate students involved in completing capstones must register for the Continuing Registration Course (CREG 001) and pay any associated tuition and/or fees. This allows students continued access to computer facilities, the library, parking, and the faculty. **A matriculated graduate student who fails to register and pay for CREG 001 will become inactive.** Students who become inactive will lose their matriculation status and will have to re-enroll with Graduate Admissions and pay any required fees to regain active status.

You can register for CREG 001 in the same manner you registered for most of your graduate courses.

The length of time to obtain a graduate degree cannot exceed 6 years unless an extension of up to 2 years is granted. That clock starts when you first began taking graduate classes.

Please note that Advisors can require regular progress reports. Based on a lack of progress, the Advisor can choose not to recommend an extension beyond the six-year time limit. Further, the Advisor can choose to assign a failing grade for the capstone.

STEP 4: Completing Department and Graduate Studies Requirements

Be sure to work with your Advisor to be sure you are adhering to any specific Department requirements for your capstone.

Graduate Studies Requires that All Capstones Must Have:

Capstone Cover Page (properly formatted)

Example: <https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-03/Capstone%20Cover%20Page.pdf>

Abstract Cover Page (properly formatted)

Example: <https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-03/Abstract%20Cover%20Page.pdf>

Abstract

Each Capstone must include a 200-300 word Abstract that summarizes the purpose, methodology, findings, and conclusions of the study. It is important that the Abstract be exact, concise, and unambiguous. There is an example in the Appendix to this Handbook.

Acknowledgements (if any)

Table of Contents

Body of the Capstone

References/Bibliography

Appendices (if any)

Biographical Note (if desired)

You may include a short biographical paragraph as the last page of your thesis. At minimum, you may summarize your academic background, and honors. Additional information—about your family, your interests, and your long-term goals—is welcome and acceptable. There is an example in the Appendix to this Handbook.

General Formatting Requirements

All capstones must be in a standard font, size 12.
The left margin must be exactly 1.5 inches.
Other margins must be exactly 1 inch.
Double spaced and single sided printing.

(In some departments, the design of the capstone is an integral part of the capstone itself. Please check with your Advisor for those requirements.)

STEP 5: Submitting Your Capstone

After your capstone has been approved by your capstone committee, you or your Advisor must submit the following 4 separate PDFs to Graduate Studies via email to gradstudies@ccsu.edu.

1. A completed and signed PDF of the Final Capstone Submission Form.
<https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/FinalCapstoneSubmission.pdf>

2. A properly formatted capstone as one PDF file. This file must contain:

Properly formatted Cover Page
Properly formatted Abstract Cover Page
200-300 word Abstract
Acknowledgements (if any)
Table of Contents
Body of the capstone
Bibliography/References
Appendices (if any)
Biographical Note (if desired)

3. PDFs of IRB and/or IACUC approvals (if applicable)

4. Completed Library Public Access Form

<https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/ThesisandDissertationPublicAccessApprovalForm1.pdf>

Please remind your Capstone Advisor to submit the appropriate grade change form for the Capstone Course with their department chair.

You will be notified in writing, usually within two weeks, that Graduate Studies has approved your capstone. If any changes are required, you will be informed of the actions you must take before final approval.

FOR THESESES (PLAN A) ONLY:

IF you plan to make your thesis available through the Library, you must also physically submit the following to the Library:

- Completed Library Access Form indicating your desire to make the thesis available.
- A properly formatted thesis as one PDF file on a thumb drive.
- A paper copy of the entire thesis (cover page through appendices), making

sure the left-hand margin of every page is at least 1.5 inches. The copy must be bound by means of a clamp-style binder or large binder clip. (You may pick up complimentary binders in the Graduate Studies office.)

Bound Personal Copy or Copies of Your Thesis (Plan A only)

As a service to our students, Elihu Burritt Library provides the option to have up to two personal copies of a Master's Thesis bound professionally. Bound personal copies of theses are \$20.00 each. You must provide print copies of your thesis for binding.

To obtain up to two hardcover bound copies of your thesis, in addition to the requirements above, physically submit to the Library:

- Bound Personal Copy of Thesis Request
<https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/BoundPersonalCopyThesisRequestForm1.pdf>
- Payment via check, made out to "Friends of Elihu Burritt Library" (\$20 for one copy, \$40 for two copies)
- A paper copy (or copies, depending on your order) of the entire thesis (cover page through appendices), making sure the left-hand margin of every page is at least 1.5 inches. The copy must be bound by means of a clamp-style binder or large binder clip. (You may pick up complimentary binders in the Graduate Studies office.)

Capstone Deadlines

Students should work with their Capstone Advisor to set deadlines which allow time for department requirements (defense, other readers, etc.) and provide time to meet the Graduate Studies requirements below.

If you are completing Plan A (thesis):

To have your thesis title included in the Commencement Booklet for the May Commencement ceremony, the complete final submission must be delivered to Graduate Studies by April 11 (or the preceding Friday if April 11 falls on a weekend). To have your thesis title included in the Commencement Booklet for the December Commencement ceremony, the complete final submission must be delivered to Graduate Studies by November 7 (or the preceding Friday if November 7 falls on a weekend). **If you miss the deadline for inclusion in the commencement booklet, you may still submit your thesis until the final examination deadlines for the Fall and Spring semesters and graduate that semester.**

FINAL CAPSTONE SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- Completed and signed Capstone Submission Form
- PDFs of IRB and/or IACUC approval forms (if applicable)
- Properly formatted Capstone as a PDF
- Completed Library Form (Plan A only)

If you have not already done so, please be sure to apply for graduation.

<https://docs.ccsu.edu/graduate-graduation-application.pdf>

Appendices:

Example - Capstone Proposal Cover Page

Example - Capstone Cover Page

Example - Abstract Cover Page

Example - Biographical Statement

(Example - Capstone Proposal Cover Page)

Capstone Title

Your Name

A Proposal

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of (Arts or Sciences)

In

Department of (list department)

Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Connecticut

Month, 20__

Advisor(s): Advisor or Advisors' Name(s)

(Example - Capstone Cover Page)

Capstone Title

Your Name

A (Thesis or Special Project)

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of (Arts or Sciences)

In

Department of (list department)

Central Connecticut State University

New Britain, Connecticut

Month, 20__

Advisor(s): Advisor or Advisors' Name(s)

(Example - Abstract Cover Page)

Capstone Title

Your Name

An Abstract of a (Thesis or Special Project)

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of (Arts or Sciences)

In

Department of (list department)

Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Connecticut

Month, 20__

Advisor(s): Advisor or Advisors' Name(s)

(Example - Biographical Statement)

Biographical Statement

Morgan Doe is the Director of Neighborhood Outreach at the Greater Hartford Community Society. Prior to completing the Master of Arts degree at Central Connecticut State University, Morgan earned a B.A. in Sociology at Wesleyan University. Morgan enjoys hiking, reading British history, and taking care of their two energetic golden retrievers.