Capstone Thesis Completion Guide
Information for students and primary advisors
Advanced Degrees and Administrative Licensure Department

Hamline University School of Education
1536 Hewitt Avenue | MS-A1720
West Hall, Second Floor
Saint Paul, MN 55104-1284

Main Line: 651-523-2600
Fax: 651-523-2489

Revised April 2017
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CAPSTONE THESIS COMPLETION CHECKLIST** 3

**DEFINING THE CAPSTONE** 5
- Capstone Development 6
- Capstone Registration 7
- Expectations for Writing 7
- IRB Protocol 7

**CAPSTONE COMPONENTS** 8
- Chapter One: Introduction 8
- Chapter Two: Review of the Literature 8
- Chapter Three: Methods 8
- Chapter Four: Results 8
- Chapter Five: Conclusion 8

**CAPSTONE COMMITTEE** 9
- Capstone Committee Meetings 9
  - Capstone Proposal Meeting 9
  - Final Capstone Meeting 10
  - Capstone Submission Requirements 10

**SUMMATIVE CAPSTONE RUBRIC** 10

**FINAL STEPS** 12
- Upload to Digital Commons 12
CAPSTONE THESIS COMPLETION CHECKLIST

Step 1: Register for the research methods course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| After you have completed all other required courses | • MAEd: GED 8023- Capstone Practicum  
• MAELS: ESL 8490- Research Methodology or GED 8023 - Capstone Practicum  
• MALEd: GED 8035- Literacy Capstone: Thinking, Researching, Writing or GED 8023 Capstone Practicum  
• MAT: GED 8023- Capstone Practicum  
• NSEE: GED 8023- Capstone Practicum |

Step 2: Draft the first three chapters of your capstone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During your research methods course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: Submit electronic Capstone Thesis Information Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • During the completion of your research methods course. | • Link to the form is found on the HSE website  
• Primary advisor information will be emailed after submission |

Step 4: Register for Capstone Thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Secure your committee members  
• Follow the posted term registration deadlines.  
• A grade must be posted for your research methods course in order to start working with your primary advisor. | • Register on Piperline for Capstone Thesis (8495).  
• Capstone registrations are valid for 3 consecutive terms, starting with and including the term of registration |
Step 5: Schedule and convene your capstone proposal meeting.

**WHEN**
After the approval of your first three capstone chapters by your primary advisor

**NOTES**
The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting and distributing copies to the committee.
Work with your committee to develop a timeline for completion.

Step 6: Submit your IRB form.

**WHEN**
- After your proposal meeting
- Prior to conducting any research

**NOTES**
- Access IRB form on Hamline Institutional Review Board website

Step 7: Complete data collection; finish writing and editing.

**WHEN**
While registered for capstone thesis.

**NOTES**
Consult with primary advisor and committee members while working on data analysis and concluding chapters.

Step 8: Schedule your final capstone meeting.

**WHEN**
- After consultation with your primary advisor.
- After the capstone is finished except for final edits.

**NOTES**
- Primary advisor emails HSE office to request electronic capstone rubric.
- The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting and distributing final copies to the committee.

Step 9: Finish final edits on your capstone.

**WHEN**
After the final capstone meeting.

**NOTES**
Editing needs are based on committee and primary advisor feedback.

Step 10: Primary capstone advisor submits electronic capstone.

**WHEN**
After the final meeting and final edits are completed, on behalf of the entire Capstone committee.

**NOTES**
Primary advisors must be logged into their Hamline Google account to access the rubric.

Revised April 2017
Step 11: Receive email containing information needed for final degree completion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| After all final edits are completed and primary advisor has submitted capstone rubric. | - HSE office will send you an email.  
- You must be logged into your Hamline Google account to access forms in email. |

Step 12: Electronic submission of finalized documents for degree completion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| After receiving an email from the HSE office about items needed for degree completion. | - PDF version of final capstone  
- Digital Commons submission agreement  
- PDF version of abstract  
- Electronic category selection form for abstract and research methods  
- Capstone Advising Evaluation |
DEFINING THE CAPSTONE

The capstone has been the culminating scholarly project for advanced degrees in education at Hamline University since the inception of the degree programs. The term capstone is used intentionally because it represents more than the formal research done in a thesis to support an intellectual theory. The capstone includes applied research or action research that draws from the student’s formal study as well as professional and personal development. Thus, the capstone is a holistic, personal, and integrated journey that includes reflection, analysis, synthesis, and conclusions. The capstone becomes part of the public knowledge base of the education profession and will be a resource for other practitioners.

Capstone Development

Some students identify a capstone topic and “burning” research question early in the program; others explore a variety of topics or questions within a topic before making a decision. In either case, classroom assignments and projects in required courses and electives will often focus on some aspect of a prospective capstone topic, which may help to build background and refine the scope of the capstone topic.

Two four-credit experiences are required for the capstone (titles and course numbers vary by degree program):

The first is a course in research design and methods. In a typical course setting, students typically draft the first three chapters of the capstone. First capstone courses include:

- **MAEd**: GED 8023-Capstone Practicum
- **MAESL**: ESL 8490-Research Methodology or GED 8023-Capstone Practicum
- **MALED**: GED 8035-Literacy Capstone: Thinking, Researching, Writing or GED 8023-Capstone Practicum
- **MAT**: GED 8023-Capstone Practicum
- **NSEE**: GED 8023-Capstone Practicum

The second is a choice between Capstone Project or Capstone Thesis. Capstone Thesis is an individual advising relationship with a primary advisor to continue and complete the work begun in the first course. Capstone advising has an 8495 course number common to all degree programs. Students have three consecutive terms/semesters, starting with and including the term/semester of registration to complete the capstone. Students may be eligible for 1 extra consecutive term pending prior approval by the Advanced Degrees department. Students who do not finish their capstones within the extra term must re-register for 8495 (another three consecutive term/semester completion timeframe). The original capstone committee members are not obligated to continue with a re-registration. Students must be registered for the capstone before an Intent to Graduate form can be submitted, and have an Intent to Graduate form on file before their degree completion materials can be submitted.

The capstone may also be accompanied by artifacts such as videos, computer programs, manuals, or other tools developed as an integral part of the written capstone. The decision to include such artifacts should be jointly made by the student and primary advisor in relation to the research design.
Capstone Registration

Registering for the capstone is a simple, two-step process:
- Submit the electronic Capstone Thesis Information Form.
- Self register in Piperline for GED 8495.

The Capstone registration will appear on the student’s Piperline transcript as:
- MAEd: GED 8495 - Capstone
- MAESL: ESL 8495 - ESL Capstone
- MAEd: GED 8495 - Capstone
- MAT: GED 8495 - Capstone
- NSEE: NSEE 8495 - Capstone

Expectations for Writing

The capstone is the culminating scholarly project of the master’s degree, and it becomes a public document catalogued in Hamline’s Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. Therefore the quality of writing is important. Growth in writing emerges through the drafting-revising process done in conjunction with the guidance and advice of the capstone committee. It is expected that each student will revise each capstone chapter multiple times.

Well-written capstones are characterized by the following:
1. Logical, clear organization
2. Sufficient number of sources
3. Sufficient description, analysis, synthesis, and reflection
4. Careful editing for grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling
5. Accurate format and citations

The responsibility for editing the capstone resides with the student and the primary advisor. Matters of content, arrangement of content, and length are decided by the student and the capstone committee. All papers must follow the style outline contained in the Capstone Formatting Guide. Its contents are based on the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition (2009) and on HU Guidelines for Capstone Formatting. The Hamline style outline takes precedence over the APA manual. Students should contact their primary advisor with questions about interpretation of APA style or its applications to the capstone.

Note: Capstones written before the publication of this guide may have been accepted under different style guidelines or degree program policies and should not necessarily be used as models for format and style. The information in this edition supersedes previous editions.

IRB Protocol

Students must receive full approval from Hamline’s Institutional Review Board before collecting any data for the capstone. The purpose of the approval is to protect both Hamline graduate students and
those who participate in their studies. Thus, you may not collect any data before you receive approval from IRB. Complete information about the process can be found on the IRB website.

**CAPSTONE COMPONENTS**

Although the number of chapters and accompanying artifacts may vary depending on the project and the advice of the capstone committee, each capstone must have an introduction, a literature review, an explanation of methodology, an analysis and interpretation of results, and a conclusion.

**Chapter One: Introduction**
The introduction to the capstone presents the rationale for the study. This is usually a personal statement about the researcher’s interest in the topic, compelling reasons to pursue the topic, and expectations for what may be learned. The introduction also includes the research question, which is the capstone’s topic. The tone of the introduction is typically reflective and contains both related personal and professional information. It concludes with an overview of the remaining chapters.

**Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**
The review of literature presents analysis, synthesis, and reflection on key people who have previously researched and published or implemented aspects of the capstone topic. The purpose of this review is to honor those who have come before and whose work has most informed the research question. Literature reviews typically include two to four large categories of research related to the capstone research question.

**Chapter Three: Methods**
The methods chapter includes the action plan for investigation of the capstone topic. This chapter articulates the kind of data to be collected or developed, how these methods will yield data that addresses the research question, how the data links to the literature review, and the method of inquiry. Each program may have specific preferences for research design or methods; students should contact their primary advisor for additional information. All research projects must be approved by the Human Subjects Committee.

**Chapter Four: Results**
The results chapter documents how the project proceeded and presents the data that was collected in relation to the research question. This chapter should include the analysis (systematic description of the information collected and any themes or patterns that emerged) and the interpretation (explanatory synthesis) of the data collected in relation to the research question. Concepts and categories identified in the literature review can assist in the interpretation of results.

**Chapter Five: Conclusion**
The concluding chapter of the capstone highlights what was learned throughout the capstone process, revisits the literature review, considers possible implications and limitations of the study and
its findings, recommends future research projects, reflects on the growth of the author, and the author’s future research agenda. The conclusion may also include reflections on the relationship of the capstone to Hamline School of Education’s Conceptual Framework.

**CAPSTONE COMMITTEE**

Consistency is important to support the logistical infrastructure related to the capstone committee. In an effort to send consistent messages to graduate students in all degree programs, and to provide consistent information to experienced and prospective committee members, the capstone committee structure is as follows, effective with the Spring 2017 registration period:

- **A primary advisor**: an HSE faculty member with a thorough understanding of the capstone process, policies, and procedures as evidenced by participation in ongoing capstone professional development through the School of Education. The primary advisory is responsible for approving the dates of the proposal and final meeting. The primary advisory is responsible for all faculty communication with the HSE program administrator including requesting the electronic final capstone rubric.
- **A content reviewer**: an individual knowledgeable about the capstone topic; someone of the student’s choosing. It is highly recommended that the content reviewer have a masters degree.
- **A peer reviewer**: A peer reviewer: someone of the student’s choosing, often a colleague who supports the researcher as an advocate, sounding board, and reader.

If you need to make a capstone committee member change, contact your primary advisor or the HSE office.

**Capstone Committee Meetings**

The capstone committee will meet at least twice: once early in the process for the proposal meeting and once at the end for the final capstone meeting and sign off. The student will interact with each committee member throughout the capstone process.

**Capstone Proposal Meeting**

The capstone proposal consists of the introduction (Chapter One), literature review (Chapter Two), and methods (Chapter Three). Students draft and revise these chapters with significant advice from the committee. When the primary advisor agrees that the proposal is sufficiently developed, the proposal meeting can be scheduled. The student should distribute copies of the proposal to the committee at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Allocate at least 90 minutes for the proposal meeting at a location convenient for all committee members.

The proposal meeting typically begins with an introduction of committee members and how they became connected to the capstone project. The researcher and the committee discuss the introduction, literature review, and methods chapters through a series of questions that are meant to help the researcher gain insights, share ideas, revise and refine the proposal as needed, and set the stage for the final chapters of the capstone. The meeting does not focus on page-by-page editing of the proposal, although the student or committee members may ask questions or express concerns.
about mechanics, citation style, and any other matters, if necessary. The proposal meeting centers on questions such as:

- Is the research question clearly stated?
- Does the method match the question?
- Does the literature review provide a solid context for understanding the capstone question?
- Is the study feasible?
- What is the timeline for project completion?

**Final Capstone Meeting**

It is expected that the capstone will be revised several times. When the primary advisor agrees that the capstone is finished except for a final edit, the final capstone meeting can be scheduled. The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting and for distributing copies of the final draft to the committee at least two weeks before the final meeting. The primary advisor is responsible for requesting the electronic capstone rubric from the HSE office one week before the final meeting.

The final capstone meeting is a celebration of the student’s accomplishment. The student usually begins with a description of the capstone journey and the results of the project. The committee members engage in questions and dialogue with the student about various aspects of the capstone.

Committee members also submit their copies of the capstone with edits and revisions. After the final meeting, the student incorporates changes into a next-to-the-last copy, which is edited by the primary advisor. Once the advisor returns this copy to the student, the final stage of the capstone has been reached.

**Capstone Submission Requirements**

After the Primary Advisor submits the electronic capstone rubric, the student will receive an email from the HSE office requesting the items needed for degree completion:

- PDF version of the capstone
- Digital Commons submission agreement
- PDF version of the abstract
- Electronic category selection form
- Capstone Advising Evaluation

These items cannot be submitted until the student has received the email from the HSE office requesting them.

**SUMMATIVE CAPSTONE RUBRIC**

Students who have completed GED 8023, ESL 8490, or GED 8035 prior to Summer 2016 will use the Capstone Rubric dated Fall 2013.

[Capstone Rubric - Fall 2013]
Students completing GED 8023, ESL 8490, or GED 8035 starting Summer 2016 term will be assessed with the New Capstone Rubric dated Summer 2016.  

[Capstone Rubric - Summer 2016](#)

The following checklist identifies items that must be present for a capstone to receive a Pass grade.

- Follows current APA format for in-text citations and references.
- Follows HU School of Education Capstone Formatting Guide.
- Is clearly organized throughout.

The **Introduction**:
- Identifies at least one specific research question.
- Describes the personal and professional significance of the research question.
- Provides an overview of the capstone.

The **Literature Review**:
- Explains clearly the connection(s) between the research question(s) and the categories of the literature review.
- Provides an overview of related literature.
- Attributes sources accurately and honestly.
- Explains, describes, and synthesizes resources, ideas and information throughout the chapter.

The **Methods**:
- Identifies the research plan.
- Presents a referenced rationale for the plan.
- Describes the setting(s) and participant(s) as appropriate to the study.
- Presents copies of research instruments.
- Describes data analysis technique(s) appropriate for the method(s).

The **Results**:
- Documents how the results respond to the research question.
- Documents data analysis in these ways:
  - Describes systematically the information collected, the themes or patterns that emerged;
  - Systematically explains the results and relationships.
- Presents results that are consistent with the methods and procedures stated in the methods chapter.
- Documents connections with the literature review.

The **Conclusion**:
- Reflects on major learning.
- Revisits the literature review.
- Considers possible implications of the study for policy, stakeholders, finance, or educational organizations.
- Considers limitations of the study.
- Recommends future research.
- Presents a plan for communicating and/or using the results.
Reflects on the relationship of the capstone to HU School of Education’s Conceptual Framework.

**FINAL STEPS**

*Upload to Digital Commons*

The following is the text of the Digital Commons@Hamline Submission Agreement. Students have the choice of giving permission for their Capstone to be uploaded to the Digital Commons platform in full, or giving permission for only their degree information, names of committee members, and abstract to be uploaded. Students should consult with their Primary Capstone Advisor as to the best option.

Digital Commons@Hamline is a hosted, open-access online repository of scholarly work produced by Hamline University’s students, faculty and staff. It was created to highlight and promote the intellectual output of the University. It is a permanent archive of scholarly material administered by Bush Memorial Library on behalf of the Hamline University community.

Material you submit to Digital Commons@Hamline will be freely accessible to the world in electronic form and searchable from Google Scholar and other search engines. In addition, Bush Memorial Library will create a record of the work you submit in its online catalogs.

By checking the box below and submitting your Work to Digital Commons@Hamline, you are agreeing to the following. Please read the terms of this Agreement carefully.

**Distribution and Preservation**
You are granting Hamline University the perpetual non-exclusive, royalty free license and right to reproduce, migrate, loan, and distribute the Work worldwide for non-commercial purposes, in any format, including electronic.

You agree that Hamline University may, without changing the content, migrate the Work to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation, conservation, or distribution. Hamline University may keep more than one copy of this work in more than one location for the purposes of security, back up, and preservation.

Hamline University will take all reasonable steps to ensure that an author’s name remains clearly associated with their work(s) and that no alterations of the content are made by the University or a third-party. However, Hamline University cannot restrict the access, download, and subsequent duplication of any work submitted to Digital Commons@Hamline, with exception of the Embargo policy stated below. Nothing in this agreement is intended to alter an author’s claim of copyright of his/her work, no matter its location or format.

**Copyright**
You have the right to publish your Work in any format without permission from Hamline University. Authors retain copyright for all content submitted to Digital Commons@Hamline unless they explicitly give it away to a third party.
Hamline University will not seek nor claim copyright on a Work submitted to Digital Commons@Hamline unless Hamline University held or had a claim to copyright to that work prior to its submission.

You represent that the Work is your original work. You also represent that the Work does not, to the best of your knowledge, infringe upon anyone’s copyright.

If the Work contains material for which you do not hold copyright, you represent that you have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant Hamline University the rights required by this Agreement. Any such third-party material must be clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the Work.

Hamline University reserves the right to withdraw content from Digital Commons@Hamline in accordance with the stated Removal policy if notified by a third-party of potential copyright infringement. In such cases, authors and contributors will be notified, if it is possible to do so.

In the event of a future dispute over the copyright to work submitted to Digital Commons@Hamline, you agree to indemnify and hold harmless Hamline University and its employees or agents for any use of the Work authorized by this Agreement.

Privacy and Confidentiality
You are responsible for addressing privacy and confidentiality issues in your work prior to submission. You are responsible for the proper redaction of confidential content before submission. You are encouraged to speak with your advisor and Hamline’s Institutional Review Board with any concerns you may have regarding the privacy and confidentiality of human subjects.

If privacy concerns are identified after a Work has been made publicly available, the site administrator is empowered to restrict access to the Work temporarily. This person will then consult with the appropriate departmental chair, dean, or administrator in order to determine a course of action regarding future access.

Removal of Content and Embargos
Digital Commons@Hamline is a permanent archive of scholarly material. As such, Hamline University retains the right to preserve permanently any Work submitted to Digital Commons@Hamline. Under some circumstances a Work may be removed from public view and a note will be added to the public record indicating its removal. The descriptive data for all Works will be retained and available for viewing by the public.

Requests for the removal of a particular Work should be made in writing to digitalcommons@hamline.edu. The request for removal of a Work does not guarantee its removal.

Embargoes of up to 2 years are possible for content submitted to Digital Commons@Hamline, but not encouraged. Questions regarding the embargo process as well as the consequences of embargoing a Work should be addressed to digitalcommons@hamline.edu.
Requests for the embargo of a particular Work are handled on a case-by-case basis and must be made independently of the Work’s submission to Digital Commons@Hamline. Please direct these requests to digitalcommons@hamline.edu.

If, for any reason, you believe your Work should not be submitted to Digital Commons@Hamline, you should not agree to these terms and you should not submit your Work using the online submission form.

Questions regarding this agreement or about submitting work to Digital Commons@Hamline can be addressed to digitalcommons@hamline.edu.