



Completing a Capstone Project

A Step-by-Step Guide

Master of Science in Organizational Leadership
Faculty of Leadership and Integrative Studies
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YOUR CAPSTONE PROJECT: A SNAPSHOT

As a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership student you have two options for your culminating experience: a capstone project or a thesis. The option you choose determines your plan of study through the program. Your coursework—particularly OGL 530, 540, and 550—incorporate elements intended to assist you in developing your ideas early on and give you a head start in drafting a capstone prospectus.

What is the difference between a capstone project and thesis?

A *thesis* is an academic paper that contributes to the field of organizational leadership.

A *capstone project* builds a connection between the academic components of the program and applies that knowledge to a real-world context. It is an *independently produced deliverable* (e.g. technical manual, website, needs assessment study, diversity training seminar, curriculum, etc.) that has a function within an organization and can either target an actual workplace need or serve as an exercise in gaining experience. Either way, capstone projects are aimed at three audiences: a client/workplace audience with an established need, the faculty overseeing your project in OGL 593, and your classmates who will serve as peer reviewers.

Capstone Project Requirements

OGL 593: Applied Project is the 3-credit hour course you take during your *last* term in the program. While you may take other courses concurrently, you must have already completed OGL 520, OGL 530, OGL 540, OGL 550, and second methods course in the 57- offerings *prior* to registering for OGL 593 and be in good academic standing.

Other requirements include:

- **Capstone Prospectus**—a plan of action or proposal for your capstone project that includes the scope, rationale, and estimated schedule. The prospectus must also address any approvals (*if needed*) that must be obtained for the capstone, such as human subjects (IRB), organizational permissions, or confidentiality disclaimers. *This must be approved prior to the first day of OGL 593 and confirmed in your iPOS.*
- **Capstone Project**—a deliverable in the form of a product, document, technological platform, program, etc.
- **Capstone Reflective Process Framework**—a series of prompts introduced in OGL 593 aimed at making connections between the capstone project and academic components of the program.
- **Capstone Colloquium Presentation**—this is the final step in the evaluation of your capstone project and provides an opportunity to showcase your work to a public audience.

CHOOSING A TOPIC FOR YOUR CAPSTONE PROJECT

Choose a topic as soon as possible. As you progress through your core courses, you will be given the opportunity to develop ideas about what to propose for your capstone project. It is highly recommended that you take advantage of that opportunity and solicit the guidance of your professors along the way.

When selecting a project, here are a few things to consider:

- Find out what is needed by an organization (either your current workplace or otherwise) and design your capstone to fill that need.
- Use the opportunity to further explore topics, approaches, or theories you enjoyed in your Organizational Leadership classes.
- Consider your career goals and use the capstone project experience to demonstrate a skill or area of expertise you can leverage professionally.

Also, keep in mind that all capstone projects must be contextualized and/or rationalized within organizational leadership scholarship and theory and draw from quantitative and/or qualitative assessment methods of data analysis in leadership effectiveness.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ASSURANCE

The Faculty of Leadership and Integrative Studies has a zero-tolerance policy toward academic dishonesty that is enforced within every course and educational activity offered or sanctioned by the school. Capstone projects will be run through Turnitin to ensure originality of submissions.

Any allegation of academic dishonesty will be referred to the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts Standards Committee for review and recommendation to the dean of the school. If any student is found to have engaged in academic dishonesty in any form – including but not limited to cheating, plagiarizing and fabricating – that student shall receive a grade of XE for the class and will be dismissed from the school. There will be no exceptions.

Students who violate academic integrity policies may be dismissed immediately. Being withdrawn from a degree program can have immediate consequences regarding visa status.

Protection for Human Subjects (IRB)

Capstone projects that require research involving human subjects conducted under the auspices of Arizona State University are reviewed by the University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) in compliance with federal regulations. Documents containing any data collection from human subjects require that applications be submitted to the University Human Subjects IRB for approval before data collection or recruitment of subjects is initiated. Project not involving human subjects need not be reviewed by the Human Subjects IRB.

The IRB process requires completing online training modules, so be sure to plan accordingly.

For more information on IRB protocols, please visit

<https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/protocol-submission>

Workplace Approval

For capstone projects that will require the use of resources (i.e. employees, documents, etc.) or proprietary information from an organization, a letter of approval from the leadership of the organization must be obtained *prior* to beginning the project.

You should draft the letter or memo yourself, providing the organization with a copy and saving a signed copy to include with your prospectus. While there is no specific format you should use, be sure to include:

- Your name
- The name of your program
- The duration of the project
- The nature of the information or resources you plan to use for your capstone project
- The way you plan to use the information or resources
- The expected outcome or benefit to your capstone project

Note: If you are uncertain whether your capstone project will require an IRB and/or Workplace Approval, speak to your faculty advisor or your OGL 550 or 593 professors.

GAINING PROGRAM APPROVAL FOR CAPSTONE PROJECT: THE PROSPECTUS

A prospectus is a document that serves as the project proposal and must be approved *prior* to beginning work on the capstone project. While you will be working on elements of the prospectus within your core classes, you will also be able to develop it in OGL 540 and OGL 550.

Components of the capstone prospectus include:

- Purpose and scope of project
- Project context and rationale
- Analytical method(s) that will be employed
- Ethical considerations
- Approvals, if needed (IRB and workplace approvals must be obtained *prior* to the start of OGL 593)
- Project schedule that *starts at the beginning of the OGL 593 term* and *concludes one week prior* to the last day of the term, leaving time for revisions and defense

OGL 593: APPLIED PROJECT (CAPSTONE)

The OGL 593: Applied Project course adheres to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) standards for a 3-credit hour course, which expects *an investment of 135 hours*. While more details can be found in the course syllabus, the following components are factored into the final course assessment:

- Dedicated meetings (in person or virtual) with faculty
- Capstone reflective process framework—a series of prompts aimed at making connections between the capstone project and academic components of the program
- Engagement in peer feedback
- Finalized capstone project
- Project presentation at the end-of-term colloquium

Roles and Expectations

Your Role as a MSOGL Candidate

You are the project manager who controls every aspect of your capstone project. This includes making sure that you fulfill all requirements, adhere to deadlines, and seek assistance when you need it.

Your MSOGL Faculty Advisor

Your faculty advisor is the person whom you have worked with throughout your program to plot out your individualized Plan of Study (iPOS). While he or she may continue to serve as a resource throughout the development of your capstone project, most of your questions should be directed to the OGL 593 faculty. If you are unsure of who this might be, your faculty advisor can assist, or you can find this information by reviewing the ASU schedule for upcoming terms.

OGL 593 Faculty

Capstone projects don't require a committee like a thesis does. As a result, your professor for OGL 593 will serve as your project chair whose responsibilities include:

- approving your prospectus
- mentoring and guiding you throughout your capstone project
- facilitating the other requirements for OGL 593 (see above)
- issuing your final grade assessment to indicate that you have met the culminating experience requirement necessary for graduation

Please be prepared to meet with the OGL 593 faculty very soon after enrolling in the course. This is to set you up for success right from the start!

Planning Your Timeline

The purpose of a capstone project is to demonstrate that not only are you capable of producing graduate level work, but that you have an organized plan for completing it. The timeline should be included in the prospectus and should cover the period starting from the first day that you are enrolled in OGL 593 to 7 days prior to the last day of class. The dates in-between should be appropriately broken up to reflect significant and attainable milestones throughout the course of your project's duration. The end date (7 days prior to the last day of class) should be the "deliverable delivery" date.

The OGL 593 faculty will then review your project within a week and either:

1. Approve it as is, declaring it ready for the colloquium
2. Request minor revisions that need to be addressed prior to the colloquium
3. Request major revisions accompanied by a contract on what changes need to be made before the capstone project will be approved and the final presentation scheduled. In this situation, the candidate will likely receive an "Incomplete" grade and be held up from graduating until the project is brought up to standard and the defense completed.

The Colloquium

A colloquium will be scheduled during the last week of every term where the final presentations will be delivered and will be open to a general audience. This is the last step in the evaluation of your capstone project. The tradition of presenting your capstone serves as a rite of passage from master's student to a graduate and professional. It serves as an opportunity to share your project, the process you took to complete it, lessons learned, impact it had (or will have), and future directions.

More details about the format and timeframe will be provided in OGL 593.

Course Grades and GPA

Faculty of Leadership and Integrative Studies students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) overall and in courses included on their plans of study. Courses taken as an undergraduate at ASU and reserved for use in a graduate degree program are included in the GPA (i.e. a “4+1” program).

If a student’s GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be notified in writing and placed on probation. If the student’s GPA is not raised to at least a 3.0 by the end of the next semester, a recommendation will be made to Graduate Education to remove the student from the program.

To receive their degrees, students also are required to earn at least a B (3.0) in their culminating experience of a thesis or applied capstone.

Incomplete Grades

Students who receive an “Incomplete” grade in a graduate-level course (500-level or above) must complete the necessary work within one calendar year. If the incomplete is not removed within one calendar year, it will become part of the student’s permanent transcript and cannot be used on a student’s plan of study. To receive credit for the course and capstone project, the student must repeat the course by re-registering, paying fees and fulfilling all course requirements. This may also delay or prevent a student’s graduation.

Students with more than one “Incomplete” at any time will be considered “failing to make adequate progress,” and will be notified and placed on probation. If the student does not complete the work to remove the incomplete and earn a letter grade by the end of the calendar year, a recommendation may be made to Graduate Education to remove the student from the program.

ARCHIVING YOUR PROJECT

Abstracts of all MSOGL Capstone Projects will be archived in a repository upon successfully completing OGL 593 and will be accessible to future students in the program.