

Capstone Procedure for Students

This document is designed to familiarize students with the capstone procedure. This process applies to internships, projects and theses. (Ratified February 9, 2010)

- 1) **Prospectus Meeting:** Once the student has selected a capstone committee the chair will help him/her create a prospectus for the capstone. Once the committee chair has worked with the student to draft and revise the document s/he will send an email to the committee letting them know of the student's progress and request that by the end of two weeks all committee members read the document and be available for a prospectus meeting. This meeting is designed to get everyone on the same page and help the student's capstone be a high quality experience (e.g., both the process and the end product). **In order to meet deadlines, students should plan to have this meeting the semester prior to working on/completing the capstone.** For example, if you plan to graduate in May, you should have committee approval (e.g., the prospectus meeting) by the end of October. Choosing to do otherwise puts unnecessary pressure on both students and faculty and may prevent you from graduating in a timely manner.
- 2) **Capstone Writing/Activities:** The student will work primarily with his/her chair to draft/revise/complete the capstone. Committee members will be as involved in the process as the chair deems appropriate. Remember all three capstone options have a written component which must meet appropriate writing standards in order to receive a passing grade.
- 3) **Pre-Defense Status:** Once the student's capstone is to a point the chair feels it is ready for the oral defense stage, s/he should send an email to the entire committee indicating the student's progress. At this point the student will be instructed to send the document to the committee. Students should not send documents without the chair's permission. Committee members are then expected to carefully read the entire document and then give a "yes" or "no" vote within two weeks time to the chair. A "yes" vote indicates that the student is ready to go to the oral defense and that provided s/he presents well and deftly answer questions, only minor issues with the student's work remain. These might include adding several pages of description, editing, or changes to sources. Final changes are part of the process and an important part of doing your best work. A "no" vote means that the student's work is not ready for the oral exam. Faculty will then provide the specific reasons for the "no" decision and a list of correctives the student will use in order to make appropriate changes. Then the process begins again until satisfactory progress is made. There should be no set of circumstances where a student goes to oral defense without a unanimous "yes" vote from all committee members.
- 4) **Setting up the Defense:** Once all committee members have agreed that the student is ready to proceed to the oral defense the committee chair should send an email to schedule the defense date. Students should not schedule defense dates.

That is the chair's responsibility. The department secretary will help with scheduling, so please contact her with your available times and dates. Students should also have a discussion with their chair about expectations and procedures for the oral defense. For example, the student's report should be approximately 20 minutes then the student will answer questions for 20-30 minutes. At that point the student and all others present will be excused from the room while the committee comes to a judgment. When the judgment has been made the student is brought back in to the room to receive the committee's decision. **Students must have a defense date scheduled two weeks prior to the last date of instruction. Capstone defenses will not be scheduled after that time.**

5) During the Defense: Students should engage faculty members in a professional manner including business dress, appropriate titles, etc. Remember this is a professional degree. Attacking faculty members via accusatory remarks, threats (emotional, psychological, or physical) will not be tolerated. This behavior is grounds for failing the student on the defense. In such cases where students behave inappropriately in the judgment of the committee, the student will have a hearing with the Graduate Director, Department Chair and College Dean to determine whether the student will be allowed to schedule a second defense date and establish the conditions for doing so. Ultimately, failing the capstone defense will prevent the student from earning his/her degree. **Graduate students who are enrolled in capstone credit may attend the defense meeting with prior approval from the Graduate Director. No family members, friends or acquaintances will be permitted to attend the capstone defense, which is in essence a professional examination.**

6) After the Defense: Students should meet with committee chairs at the end of the defense (or a time shortly after) to discuss all required changes to the capstone and set a schedule for completing them. Once the student makes the corrections the chair should review them and once satisfied will instruct the student to get signatures (if not already done during the defense), sign the library digitization permission form and send a *pdf* of the final document to the department secretary. Please explore the following links. The first will help you understand SUU policy and display a model for the title page that is followed by all graduate programs on campus. <http://www.li.suu.edu/library/Policies/2.10%20Graduate%20Theses.pdf> The second is required library digitization permission form <http://www.li.suu.edu/library/Policies/2.10%20Thesis%20permission.pdf>.

The Department will also publish an electronic version on its website: <http://www.suu.edu/hss/comm/masters/capstone.html>. The completed and approved document must be submitted to the department Administrative Assistant for posting to the website. The **file cannot exceed 900 KB in size** or it will not be posted. Should the file size exceed the requirement, you should remove photos or other content which will usually reduce the size to the acceptable amount before submitting it.

Only when these final steps are completed is the student's degree officially conferred. Incomplete grades will remain on the transcript for capstone courses until this process is completed and a diploma will be held in abeyance.