



## University of Lethbridge Master of Education Program GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE CAPSTONE

In completing the Capstone, students should refer to relevant sections of the *Graduate Programs in Education Policies and Procedures* (see <http://www.uleth.ca/education/forms-and-guidelines>).

The Capstone is a supervision model intended to provide structured timelines, instructor feedback, and collegial support for completion of a one course-credit (3.0 credit hour) culminating activity for the Master of Education program. The Capstone assists students in integrating the discrete knowledge and skills they have acquired into a whole greater than the sum of its parts. There are three components to the Capstone: the Question, the Response, and the Presentation.

### 1. The Capstone Question

The Capstone will consist of a single question proposed and refined through the semester that integrates the substantive, methodological, and reflective issues raised through the process of completing a graduate degree at the University of Lethbridge. Students are to demonstrate and assess their knowledge by developing a question or topic related to their professional lives as teachers, administrators, or counsellors. The question will allow students to include:

- analyzing changes in the understanding of some topic or theme as a result of experiences within the Master's program
- analyzing changes in the understanding and conduct of their professional practice
- developing an action plan for the student's own further professional growth, and/or providing leadership in the further education and development of colleagues within one's professional community

The precise nature and composition of the question or topic is open to negotiation with the instructor (within the limits of required academic and professional standards) to maximize the personal relevance and learning of each student.

### 2. The Capstone Response

Answers should be approximately 45 pages (9,000 words) in length. Quality is more important than length however, and papers may be shorter if concisely written, or slightly longer if successful development of the argument absolutely requires it.

#### Requisites

The response will:

- posit a central cogent theme supported by research, thoughtful analysis, logical arguments and carefully selected supportive detail;
- present grounded theory arising out of research, reflection, practice and current thinking on the chosen topic; the arguments presented build to a consistent conclusion;
- demonstrate an ability to think critically in the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of relevant information;
- demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of M.Ed. course material including an in-depth understanding of the relevant concepts, theories, and issues related to the topic addressed by applying it where relevant;
- synthesize recent research (as previously covered in course work) to support the themes that emerge in the paper (i.e., it is not expected that the student embark on new reading, but they should be able to demonstrate that in completing their degree they have mastered the research literature in at least one area)
- demonstrate an awareness of differing view-points and a rigorous assessment of these undertaken where relevant;
- present reflective analysis of the student's learning, including a demonstration of growth over the course of the program;

- demonstrate originality, insight, and creativity, and a new understanding of theory or practice related to the question or topic addressed in the examination;
- present a clear, fluent, organized, and well-written paper;
- shows mastery of grammar, structure, style and the APA style of referencing;
- demonstrates the ability to communicate in writing at the level expected for publication in an academic journal.

### **Tips for Students**

To assist students in avoiding some common errors in completion of the Capstone, the following suggestions have been compiled:

- Avoid merely describing the process of your completion of the Masters program; brief focused statements of how particular courses impacted understanding of the Capstone topic(s) may be appropriate if directed to specific points.
- Avoid an over reliance on summaries of course material; think "synthesis", rather than "Coles Notes".
- Avoid lengthy excerpts from previously submitted work; brief reference may be made to previously graded assignments where appropriate, but lengthy excerpts risk the charge that you are resubmitting work for duplicate credit, which is an academic offense (see the section on *Duplication* under *Academic Offenses* in the University of Lethbridge Calendar).
- One effective approach to the examination is to carefully integrate theory and practice.
  - ~ Use concrete examples from your own professional practice or workplace to illustrate the theories under discussion.
  - ~ Use relevant theory from the research literature to interpret any real world experiences you relate in your paper.
  - ~ Build on your understanding of theory and current practice to propose future directions in a practical action plan.
- Ensure that the manuscript includes a formal introduction and conclusion.
- Ensure that the manuscript is organized by headings and subheadings; headings and subheadings to be included in a table of contents.
- Ensure that the manuscript follows the *Checklist for Submission of Culminating Activity Documents – APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition* (see <http://www.uleth.ca/education/programs-degrees/graduate-studies/culminating-activities/capstone>).
  - ~ All drafts must include page numbers.
  - ~ Quotations, bibliography, citations, and references must be in APA format.
- Ensure that the final manuscript has been thoroughly edited and proofread.
  - ~ In addition to demonstrating knowledge and skills appropriate to a M.Ed. degree, the Capstone must demonstrate appropriate standards of written communication; grammatical or APA errors, lack of clarity, poor structure or organization are unacceptable.

**Note:** Please be certain to include all appropriate citations of work used in your document. The University of Lethbridge subscribes to a plagiarism detection service. Student work submitted for credit in the Capstone may be submitted to this system to verify its originality.

### **3. The Capstone Presentation**

The members of the Capstone group will participate in a symposium consisting of the presentation of their final papers. Papers are not to be read aloud, but to be presented through a 10 to 15 minute oral or PowerPoint presentation, followed by a five to 10 minute open discussion period. The instructor will be gauging the effectiveness of your presentations on the following criteria:

Clarity and interest: It is expected that presentations will be involving as well as informative. Avoid over-reliance on lecture.

Thoroughness : Your colleagues should come away from your presentation with a sufficiently thorough grasp of the material to be able to discuss it intelligently.

- Depth of Analysis: Demonstrate an awareness of differing points of view, originality, insight, and creativity; the presentation goes beyond repeating what others have said and contributes something new to our understanding of the topic.
- Argumentation: Take and defend a position using logical arguments and carefully selected supportive detail.
- Discussion: The degree to which you have achieved the above goals should be reflected in the liveliness of the subsequent discussion.

#### 4. Submission of Final Capstone Document

A clean, error-free, APA-formatted document (in pdf format), with correctly formatted title page, must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research (see 8. Suggested Timelines below). Also, refer to Table 11. Key Deadlines for Capstone Route in the *Graduate Programs in Education Policies and Procedures*.

#### 5. The Capstone Supervisor

A Capstone Supervisor is assigned to coordinate and supervisor the Capstone.

#### 6. Registration

Students are required to register in the Capstone through the Bridge. Students will register in the Capstone offered as part of their cohort schedule. Students must have completed all course work prior to registration in the Capstone.

#### 7. Grading

Grading is Pass/Fail. If a student has failed the Capstone she/he has one opportunity to repeat the Capstone.

#### 8. Suggested Timelines

<b>Orientation Session(s)</b>	Will normally occur a minimum of one term prior to the Capstone
<b>Submission of Questions and Responses</b>	As per outline provided by Supervisor
<b>Submission of Final Document</b>	Submitted to Office of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (in pdf format) by last day of semester, or as scheduled by Supervisor. See section 4. Submission of Final Capstone Document above. Also refer to Table 11. Key Deadlines for Capstone Route in the <i>Graduate Programs in Education Policies and Procedures</i> .
<b>Application for Graduation</b>	Refer to Table 11. Key Deadlines for Capstone Route in the <i>Graduate Programs in Education Policies and Procedures</i> .