



**DEPARTMENT  
OF  
NURSING**

**Capstone Project  
Guidelines**

**2011-2012**

## GUIDELINES FOR THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

### I. PURPOSE OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

The capstone project is the graduate student's scholarly alternative to the thesis. For the capstone project, students may choose from the following two options:

#### A. An academic project:

Students choosing this option will complete a substantive project that reflects integration of theory and practice. A project is viewed as an activity that is practice-based and/or research-oriented, has a clearly defined purpose and expected outcome(s) and may involve a range of action steps.

#### B. An academic paper:

Students choosing this option will complete an academic paper that is submitted for publication. The paper is expected to address a health-related topic, be research-based, and to be focused for submission to a specific journal.

### II. ELIGIBILITY TO REGISTER FOR CAPSTONE CREDIT

Prior to registering for capstone credit, the graduate student must complete a minimum of 25% of their graduate coursework (10 credits) including NURS 542 Qualitative Research in Health Care, NURS 544 Quantitative Research Methods in Care and MATH 502 Applied Statistics. Students must also select and establish a written consent with a faculty member to be the Chair of the Committee. The written consent is then submitted to the administrative assistant of the department who will assign the proper registration code for the student to register on Gullnet.

### III. SELECTION OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT TOPIC

It is the student's responsibility to select a capstone project topic. The project shall be either an academic project or an academic paper as described above. In making this decision, students should consider the following:

- A. The relevance of the proposed project to advanced practice nursing.
- B. The congruence of the project with their academic and practice interests.
- C. Their interest in writing and their writing skills.
- D. The scope of the project and the potential for completing it in a reasonable time frame.
- E. If the capstone project involves research using human subjects, the student must receive approval to conduct such research from the University Committee on Human Research **prior to conducting any capstone activities**. If the student is conducting research on human subjects in an external agency, that agency may also require review by an institutional review board. It is the student's responsibility to assure that any such obligations are met.

#### IV. THE CAPSTONE PROJECT COMMITTEE

Students completing either the project or the paper option for the capstone are required to have a committee to guide them.

- A. The student shall request a faculty member to serve as a chair (the Chair) from the nursing (doctorally-prepared) faculty to serve as a major advisor for the capstone.
- B. At least two additional *master's prepared* members are selected with guidance from the capstone project Chair. One of these members shall be on the nursing faculty and one may be from outside the nursing department. ***Committee members shall have a minimum of a master's degree. However, if a fourth member is desired for the committee, and this fourth member does not have a Master's degree, he/she may be considered if they are known to have substantial expertise in the topic area, and all other committee members agree. Committee members may not be concurrently enrolled in the Masters nursing programs at SU, or concurrently serving as an Instructor for the capstone student.*** Members (the Committee) are generally selected for their expertise in the topic area, the project methods or the publication process. A summary of faculty research interests may be obtained from the secretary in the Office of Graduate and Second Degree Programs.
- C. The student is responsible for having the identified Chair and Committee indicate their willingness to serve by signing the *Capstone Project Committee Designation* form (Appendix A).

#### V. THE CAPSTONE PROJECT PROPOSAL

The capstone proposal shall be developed by the student. The student may wish to seek direction from the Chair as to the format and content of the proposal. All proposals should clearly identify the capstone option the student has selected, the time line for completion of the capstone and the nature of the written evidence of learning that will be submitted on completion of the project. (See Appendix B for sample).

The Chair will review the proposal and suggest any needed changes in preparation for its submission to the Committee. After the Committee has had an opportunity to review the proposal, the student, in collaboration with the Chair, will schedule a formal committee meeting and will present the proposed capstone project to the Committee.

All committee members must approve the proposal before the capstone project is implemented. In signing the *Capstone Project Proposal Approval* form, (Appendix C), the Committee is authorizing the student to proceed with the project as approved. This form is submitted to the Director of the Graduate and Second Degree Programs and requires amending in writing if any changes are made (with copies to the Chair and Committee).

## VI. EVIDENCE OF LEARNING FOR THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

For both capstone options, the academic project and academic paper, the student shall provide evidence of learning both orally and in writing. Students are required to make a formal oral presentation of their work at either a Fall or Spring Graduate Research Day. Summer presentations are an **exception**, and are contingent upon capstone committee members' availability, and written approvals from the Chair of the Nursing Department and the Director of the Graduate Nursing Program, at least 3 weeks before the last day of the spring semester. (Appendix G)

### A. Oral Presentation of the Completed Capstone Project:

1. To be eligible to present the capstone project, the student must be currently registered for at least one credit of NURS 591.
2. No later than 4 weeks prior to Graduate Research Day (dates will be posted by the second week of each semester), the student will seek confirmation from the Chair and Committee as to readiness for the public presentation of the project. Presenting students will have approximately 30 minutes for the presentation and should make every effort to adhere to that time frame. Deadline dates will be available for each semester from the Secretary of the Office of Graduate and Second Degree Programs.
3. The Graduate Research Day presentations will be open to students' families, peers and selected members of the Salisbury academic and professional communities. **(Summer presentations are dependent upon prior approval. See Appendix H).** Students should confirm the nature and number of guests with the capstone project Chair at least three weeks prior to the event.
4. The capstone Chair and Committee will evaluate the presentation as **satisfactory** or **unsatisfactory** based on criteria in the *Guidelines for Capstone Presentation* (Appendix D).

### B. Written Documentation of the Completed Capstone Project

In addition to the oral presentation, students have an obligation to present written evidence of learning as part of completion of the capstone project. Students completing the **project option** shall submit to the capstone Chair and Committee written documentation representing the project that they have completed. The specific format for this documentation will be agreed upon by the student, the Chair and the Committee as part of the proposal process. Students pursuing the **paper option** will submit to the Chair and Committee a formal written paper targeted to a specific professional journal.

1. No later than 4 weeks prior to graduation, students pursuing either option must present the appropriate written documentation of the project to the Chair and the Committee for their approval prior to any dissemination of written materials or submission to a journal. This documentation includes the professional abstract (see guidelines), the Power Point slides (6 per page), Human Subjects approval form, and any final product (manuscript, video, manual, curriculum module, etc.).

2. Students selecting the **paper option** for the capstone are responsible for preparing the final manuscript according to the author guidelines provided by the target journal. The manuscript and cover letter are mailed to the journal after final approval by the Chair and Committee.
3. Upon approval of the written documentation of the project or the manuscript by the Chair and Committee, the *Final Capstone Project Approval form* (Appendix E) is signed by all members.

## VII. REGISTRATION FOR CAPSTONE COURSE AND GRADING

Students must obtain written permission from the Chair of their committee, which is then provided to the nursing department secretary to obtain a registration code for the student to use on Gullnet. The student must then register for NURS 591 Capstone Project for a minimum of three credits during the program. *These credits may be taken together or one credit at a time.* If necessary to finish the project, the student may take more than the 3 required credits.

For each semester in which the student is registered for NURS 591, but has not completed the project, a grade of IP (In Progress) will be given. At the completion of the project, a letter grade will be assigned to 3 NURS 591 credits, usually the final 3 credits. All other IP grades will be converted to P (Pass) grades on the student's transcript.

In determining the final grade for the capstone project, both the content and process of all NURS 591 experiences are considered. The Chair, in consultation with the Committee, assigns the final grade, using the Capstone Grading Form (Appendix F). *The student must earn a grade of B or better to successfully complete the Capstone.*

## VIII. CAPSTONE DOCUMENTATION FOR SUBMISSION TO GRADUATE OFFICE

The official record of each capstone project is maintained in the Office of Graduate and Second Degree Programs. Each student is responsible to see that all of the following have been submitted.

- A. A written abstract of the project that has been approved by the Chair of the Committee, and the Graduate Director. (Abstract Guidelines, Appendix H)
- B. For students selecting the **academic project** option, written evidence of the completed project (see Section VI-B)
- C. For students selecting the **academic paper** option, a copy of the manuscript, the inquiry letter (if one was required), and a copy of the published article (if manuscript accepted).

## MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

The student will select a target journal, newsletter or professional publication to which they intend to submit their manuscript. Author's specifications can be obtained from the latest issue of the journal or at [www.mco.edu/lib/instr/libinsta.html](http://www.mco.edu/lib/instr/libinsta.html). Students may wish to submit a query letter first and should consult with their Chair regarding this. When the student has selected a journal that may be interested in the capstone topic, a copy of the guidelines for authors for that journal and a copy of an article from a recent issue of the journal with a format that is similar to your anticipated manuscript will be given to each of your committee members.

### Use of Copyrighted Material in the Capstone project

The U.S. Copyright Act of 1976 established regulations related to the use of printed and visual materials. The student is responsible for obtaining permission when reproducing a significant portion of another author's work. When in doubt whether permission is required, it is better to seek permission to use another's work.

### Style

The student will be responsible for strictly adhering to the style requirements of the publisher to whom they are submitting the manuscript. Generally, in nursing journals, this is the APA format. If there are no style requirements specified, the student should use APA format.

### Use of English and Editing

An International student for whom English is not a first language, is encouraged to have their manuscript edited. The student should check with the Coordinator of International Student Services for information about assistance. With or without special editing assistance, all students are reminded that they have the responsibility for the grammar, language, and style of the capstone project.

### Academic Integrity

The faculty places high value on academic integrity in the nursing program. The principle of academic integrity is manifested by the spirit in which truth is pursued, by a process where the student learns about the concept of integrity and in a procedure for determining individual accountability for the standard of integrity. (*SU Student Handbook*). The term *academic dishonesty* shall be defined as deliberate and deceptive misrepresentation of one's own work. As described in the *SU Student Handbook*, such misrepresentation shall include, but not be limited to plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as claiming as one's own work, be it literal or in paraphrase, the work of another. Students should consult with the capstone Chair if there are any questions about the appropriate use of secondary sources in the capstone project.

### Physical Requirements for the Manuscript

**Paper.** The student is to use white paper only. The paper must be 8 ½" x 11." Unacceptable paper includes paper any color other than snow white or any type of paper with a cotton content less than 25%.

**Approval.** The student must obtain final approval of the content of the manuscript from the capstone Chair prior to making copies. The student is responsible for having copies of the approved capstone project made. At least two weeks prior to Commencement, the student shall submit the original manuscript to the selected journal, and four copies of the manuscript to the Office of Graduate and Second Degree Programs (one for the office and three for committee members).

**Appearance.** Use of type features such as underline, italics, or bold should be minimal. Handwritten corrections, correction tape or use of white-out are not acceptable. The final manuscript should be of high quality print so that it reproduces well. Printers should be laser or high-resolution inkjet printers. The paper is to be printed on one side only.

**Tables & Figures.** Each table or figure is printed on a separate page. Most journals limit the numbers of tables or figures to 3. Consult the author's guidelines and examples of articles published in recent issues of that journal.

## COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL

If the capstone project involves research using human subjects, the student must receive approval to conduct such research from the University Committee on Human Research. Guidelines for filing appropriate forms can be found on the University's website at:

<http://www.salisbury.edu/gsr/research/compliance/irb/constitution.html>

If approval is required, the student should complete the application packet with assistance from the chair of the capstone project or University Research Services as needed. Once the completed application is approved by the Chair, the Chair will forward it for approval by the Chair of the Department of Nursing who will need 3-5 days to review it.

The application must then be submitted by the student to the Committee on Human Research through University Research Services at least two weeks prior to the Human Research Committee's next meeting. Once the student receives official written notification from the Human Research Committee that their project was approved, this documentation must be presented to the Chair of the Capstone Committee and filed in their folder with the Graduate Program.

If the student is conducting research on human subjects in an external agency, that agency may also require review by an institutional review board. **It is the student's responsibility to assure that any and all obligations are met.**

Projects that include human subjects' data without the appropriate Human Subjects and/or Institutional Review Board approvals will not be accepted by the committee, and may result in an unsatisfactory final capstone grade for the student.

## APPENDIX A

SALISBURY UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING  
GRADUATE PROGRAM

CAPSTONE COMMITTEE DESIGNATION

NAME OF STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**CAPSTONE TOPIC:**

1. SALISBURY UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT?

\_\_Yes      \_\_No

2. AGENCY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT?

\_\_Yes      \_\_No

**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:** The faculty whose signature appears below agree to serve on the capstone committee for this student.

PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE    DATE
(1) _____ (Chair)	(1) _____ / _____
(2) _____	(2) _____ / _____
(3) _____	(3) _____ / _____

## APPENDIX B

## CAPSTONE PROJECT PROPOSAL OUTLINE

Graduate Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Credits: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of NURS 590/591 Credits to Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Capstone Project Option: (Please circle choice)

1. Academic Project
2. Academic Paper

Capstone Committee Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Capstone Committee Members: (1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

1. SALISBURY UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT?

 Yes  No

2. SALISBURY UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL PROCESS INITIATED FOR THIS PROJECT?

 N/A  Yes/complete  Yes/In-progress

3. AGENCY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT?

 Yes  No

4. AGENCY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL PROCESS INITIATED FOR THIS PROJECT?

 N/A  Yes/complete  Yes/In-progress

Capstone Proposal: (Please attach proposal in the following format)

**TITLE OF PROJECT**  
**PURPOSE OF PROJECT**  
**RATIONALE FOR PROJECT**  
**PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING THEM**  
**SPECIFIC OUTCOMES OF PROJECT**  
 If paper, title of paper  
 If project, specific written evidence  
**TIME LINE FOR COMPLETION OF PROJECT**  
 By Semester

## APPENDIX C

SALISBURY UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING  
GRADUATE PROGRAM

CAPSTONE PROJECT PROPOSAL APPROVAL

NAME OF STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**CAPSTONE PROJECT TITLE:**

**COMMITTEE APPROVAL:**

Chair,	Date
	Date
	Date

**COMMENTS:**

1. SALISBURY UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT?  
 Yes       No

2. SALISBURY UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL PROCESS INITIATED FOR THIS PROJECT?

N/A                       Yes/complete                       Yes/In-progress

3. SALISBURY UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL (if applicable)

Documentation received on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ and placed in student's file until project completion.

4. AGENCY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT?  
 Yes       No

5. AGENCY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL PROCESS INITIATED FOR THIS PROJECT?

N/A                       Yes/complete                       Yes/In-progress

6. AGENCY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL (if applicable)

Documentation received on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ and placed in student's file until project completion.

**APPENDIX D**

**SALISBURY UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAM**  
**GUIDELINES FOR CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>Content and Thought</b>	Provides outline and references Presents accurate content Includes appropriate references Incorporates appropriate research Summarizes and synthesizes ideas Appropriately answers questions from audience Information included is valid for the topic	
<b>Organization</b>	Present the purpose Presents in logical order Transitions occur between thoughts Subsections reflect the main idea	
<b>Professional Style</b>	Uses correct grammar Uses professional vocabulary Speaks in a clear, audible and distinct voice. Maintains eye contact with audience Regulates the pace of speech Uses appropriate nonverbal communication Personal appearance appropriate for event	
<b>Presentation Strategies</b>	Uses a variety of strategies Modifies techniques depending on audience response Uses audio/visual technology appropriately	

**APPENDIX E**

**SALISBURY UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING  
GRADUATE PROGRAM**

**FINAL CAPSTONE PROJECT APPROVAL**

**NAME OF STUDENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUCCESSFULLY PRESENTED HIS/HER CAPSTONE PROJECT TITLE:**

**MEMBERS OF CAPSTONE COMMITTEE:**

_____	_____
<b>Chair,</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____
	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____
	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____
	<b>Date</b>

## APPENDIX F

**SALISBURY UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING  
GRADUATE PROGRAM**

## CAPSTONE/THESIS GRADING SHEET

THE STUDENT:	Below Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
1. Selected an appropriately focused topic for the capstone/thesis with minimal guidance.			
2. Prepared a clearly written, well thought-out initial capstone/thesis proposal and completion time-line following the capstone/thesis guidelines.			
3. Consistently communicated clearly, effectively, and in a timely manner about recommended revisions with the capstone/thesis chair. Human Subjects and IRB Approvals were obtained appropriately, and submitted to Committee Chair, as required.			
4. Was receptive to corrections, editing and constructive criticism presented by the capstone/thesis chair and committee.			
5. Managed the efficient completion of the capstone/thesis project by working independently and making steady progress according to the prepared plan.			
6. Demonstrated initiative and self-direction in the capstone/thesis completion process.			
7. Distilled the significant components of the capstone/thesis project into a final scholarly oral presentation on Graduate Scholarship Day.			
8. Implemented a plan for final dissemination of capstone/thesis project according to capstone/thesis guidelines.			
9. Submitted all appropriate documentation of the capstone/thesis to the chair, committee members and the Graduate Office as delineated in the capstone/thesis guidelines.			

**DETERMINATION OF GRADE:**

- A**                    **EXCELLENT – Consistently exceeds standards**  
**B+**                   **VERY GOOD – Exceeds standards on the majority of criteria**  
**B**                     **GOOD – Meets or exceeds standards on the majority of criteria**
- C+ or below**    **UNSATISFACTORY – Falls below standards on the majority of criteria**

**APPENDIX G****SALISBURY UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING  
GRADUATE PROGRAM****ABSTRACT GUIDELINES**

**Abstracts must be approved by the Capstone Committee Chair and the Director of Graduate Programs before being submitted for publication in the Graduate Scholarship Day Program.**

**Students can look at the APA manual for examples of appropriate abstracts.**

**Guidelines for abstracts include the following:**

- a. Provides a professional, scholarly synopsis of the academic project or paper**
- b. States the purpose of the capstone clearly and succinctly**
- c. Provides a brief rationale for the capstone**
- d. Describes the methodology or the main activities of the project**
- e. Describes the results or the end product of the capstone**
- f. Provides a summary statement that shows the relevance of the capstone project to their Masters' track**
- g. Utilizes 250-300 words maximum, using 12 point font**

**The deadline for submission of Abstracts is 4 weeks prior to Graduate Scholarship Day.**

## Appendix H

**SALISBURY UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING  
GRADUATE PROGRAM**

**SUMMER CAPSTONE/INTERNSHIP PRESENTATION PERMISSION FORM**

**NAME OF STUDENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CAPSTONE PROJECT TITLE:**

**Permission is granted for this student to enroll in (and present) their final Capstone / Internship credits during the summer session of \_\_\_\_.**

**Signatures required:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Chair of Capstone Committee**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Member**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Member**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Chair of Nursing Department**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Director of Graduate Nursing Program**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**