

Master of Public Policy Student Capstone Project Frequently Asked Questions

What are the role and responsibilities of the Capstone Instructor?

Dean Deolalikar will serve as the Capstone Instructor for all MPP students. The Capstone Instructor is responsible for approving all capstone projects and for the general oversight over the capstone projects. He will be responsible for approving advancement of students from PBPL 289A to 289B based upon satisfactory student and team progress, and he will ultimately be responsible for awarding the final grades for the courses (based on the recommendation of the Capstone Mentor).

How are Capstone Teams formed?

Capstone Teams can be formed by students themselves. All MPP students should complete the Capstone Project info sheet at the beginning of the fall quarter. This will allow the Student Affairs Advisor to determine those student already with projects and those still seeking teams. Students who are seeking a team will be notified by mid-October with a list of other students who are not part of a team. The Capstone Team ideally should consist of 2 to 3 students. Teamwork better mimics how policy is made and executed in the “real world.”

What are the role and responsibilities of the Capstone Mentor?

MPP students are responsible for seeking out a capstone mentor to work with them on the specific project for the duration of the two quarters. Student teams should look for faculty whose policy specialties align in some way with their project. The entire student team should meet with the Capstone Mentor to obtain the final signature on the Capstone Proposal.

The Capstone Mentor’s primary responsibilities include advising and mentoring the student team in terms of the relevance, importance and practicality of their capstone project; monitoring and facilitating team progress; serving as a direct research reference and contact on behalf of the Capstone Instructor; and generally ensuring that core objectives and requirements of the Capstone Project are met. The Capstone Mentor shall report student progress to the Capstone Instructor. The Capstone Mentor will also evaluate the final Capstone Project and communicate the results of the evaluation to the Capstone Instructor.

The Capstone Proposal?

Once Capstone Teams are formed and a Capstone Mentor is secured teams must submit the Capstone Project Proposal to the Student Affairs Coordinator, Jolene Sedita, no later than December 1st. All teams must submit the Capstone Proposal Form, with all required signatures, as well a proposal narrative detailing the project proposal and timeline. Teams will be notified by the Capstone Instructor when their proposal has been approved. The Capstone Proposal Form is attached at the end of this FAQ.

Why teams and not individual projects?

Policy development, analysis and/or evaluation are rarely conducted individually. The team format better mimics how policy analyses are executed in the real world. Whether students choose to pursue careers in academia or practice, collaborative team work is vitally important.

How will each team's Capstone Project be evaluated and graded?

The Capstone Project will be evaluated individually and collectively, which is why each team member is graded on and responsible for actively participating, preparing his/her own policy brief, meeting and communicating with the Capstone Mentor throughout the two-quarter Capstone Research Project period.

The group report is evaluated by the Capstone Instructor and Capstone Mentor.

How often will each Capstone Team meet with the Capstone Mentor?

Teams are responsible for requesting and scheduling regular meetings with the Capstone Mentor throughout the Capstone A and B quarters. Meeting times are dependent upon demand throughout the research project duration from initiation to completion. The purpose of these meetings are to seek guidance and clarification of any outstanding research issues and ensure that the Capstone Team is making adequate and appropriate progress towards successfully completing their project.

What if one or more team member's participation is minimal or non-existent?

Teams are responsible for self-monitoring participation and progress. It is the responsibility of each member to ensure contributions are meaningful towards the completion of the capstone project.

What is the Capstone Symposium and when does it occur?

The capstone symposium is intended for each Capstone Team to present their work, and may include possible policy clients (i.e. partner agency representatives, interested academic and professional colleagues, peers, students) in the audience. The symposium is intended to create and facilitate a positive learning environment in which students can share research techniques, reflect upon policy work completed, and orally present their findings for audience information, feedback and constructive critique.

The Capstone Instructor will work with SPP faculty, staff and students to schedule the symposium, which will be held in the first or second week of June.

Milestone Dates

- Capstone Proposal Form is due by December 1st 2019
- Completion of Capstone Project, first week of June 2020
- Symposium presentations during finals week.