

# MBA Capstone Project Guidelines

Throughout your MBA program, you have worked to develop as a practitioner-scholar to meet the needs and future challenges as a business leader. Your program culminates in the capstone project, which forms the primary focus of the final course you will take in the program. The capstone project is intended to provide you the opportunity to demonstrate your MBA program outcomes by:

- Planning and executing the strategic and tactical elements of a comprehensive project.
- Integrating and demonstrating skills and techniques you have learned throughout the MBA program.
- Communicating project outcomes both in written form and in a formal presentation.
- Completing your MBA program with an experience that reinforces and integrates the components that have preceded it.

The following information outlines the requirements and work associated with the capstone project for this course and the next.

## Capstone Project Examples

Examples of project types that might be proposed to meet these requirements include but are not limited to:

- Preparation of a strategic plan for an organization.
- A strategic analysis of all or a selected part of an organization.
- Development of a case study of all or a selected part of an organization.
- Development of an intervention, such as a workshop or training activity, that is broad-based enough to demonstrate the program-level outcomes.
- Development of a consulting report on a problematic issue within an organization, provided that the issue is broad-based enough to demonstrate program-level outcomes.

You may propose other structures for the capstone project so long as you are able to identify how the proposed project satisfies the requirement of demonstrating the program-level outcomes. When choosing your topic, keep in mind that your capstone project *must* result in recommendations, next steps, or some other type of actionable, evidence-based takeaways for the reader or subject of the project.

## Capstone Project Requirements

The capstone course project must demonstrate your achievement of the MBA program outcomes. The following table is taken from the proficient column of the final capstone grading rubric. It outlines the expectations for demonstrating each program outcome.

<b>Program Outcome:</b>	<b>Proficient Column:</b>
1. Apply foundational knowledge and an understanding of business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines.	Applies foundational knowledge (theories, models, and practices) and an understanding of core business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines.
2. Integrate information across disciplines and from differing perspectives.	Integrates most relevant supportive and conflicting information (data, insights, best practices) across disciplines from differing primary functional perspectives individually and holistically.

3. Think critically and analytically to provide evidence-based solutions to business challenges and opportunities.	Develops logical, well-supported, solutions based on relevant, sound, logical, and credible evidence (data, insights, analyses, best practices) to solve business challenges and opportunities.
4. Apply innovative, strategic, and sustainable approaches to business practice and planning.	Applies innovative, strategic, and sustainable (long-term) approaches to business practice and planning.
5. Lead and collaborate in virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments.	Applies leadership and collaboration principles and strategies for virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments.
6. Integrate principles of ethics and integrity into business decisions.	Integrates principles of ethics and integrity into business decisions by assessing ethical implications and resolving ethical conflicts and dilemmas.
7. Communicate clearly and effectively in a business environment.	Communicates clearly and effectively in a business environment by applying professional speaking, effective presentation, and persuasion skills to create a clear and compelling case for business solutions.

When proposing a capstone project in MBA6028, you will be required to identify how the proposed project addresses the demonstration of program outcomes 1, 2, 5, and 6. Outcomes 3, 4, and 7 are demonstrated by the quality of the final deliverable.

The project will be completed individually, not in teams. In addition, the capstone project must meet these criteria:

- The organization must be real, not fictitious. This may be an organization to which you have direct access for data gathering or one for which you will gather data via published sources. In either case, it must be an organization for which you can gather the data needed to complete the project. If need be, you may be allowed to use a disguised name for the organization in the project report, but you must disclose to the instructor what actual organization is being used as the setting for the project.
- The scope of effort required should be such that, once planned in MBA6028, the project can be completed in a single, six-week iteration of MBA6900; extensions will be granted only in unusual situations.

## Capstone Planning Requirements and Timeline

Since the six-week duration of a single MBA course may not provide enough time for both planning and delivering the capstone project, planning for the project begins in Business Integration Skills. Typically, this course is taken in the period immediately before the capstone course. During this class, you will complete a proposal for the project that you will deliver in the final class. Specific milestones for this proposal include:

- **Unit 1** – You will post a discussion with a preliminary summary of and rationale for what you are considering as a project, for feedback from colleagues and your instructor.

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- **Unit 3** – You will submit a draft proposal for the project to your instructor for feedback. (Appendix A below contains a template to prepare the proposal and Appendix B illustrates an example of a completed draft.)
- **Unit 5** – You will submit the final proposal in Unit 5 to the instructor for grading. (Appendix C below contains an outline you may adapt to prepare your proposal.)

**Note:** Successful completion of an acceptable proposal will facilitate a smooth transition into your capstone course and help you make timely progress toward the completion of your degree. Be sure to contact your instructor with any questions or challenges you have about completing your proposal.

## Capstone Deliverables

Once you have successfully completed this class, you will move on to your final course. In your final class, you will complete the following:

**Unit 1 Capstone Project Summary** – You will develop a brief summary of your capstone project to help your instructor become familiar with your capstone project and provide appropriate guidance. This project summary will specify the topic and scope of your project, including a rough outline of your final capstone project and a project plan that briefly outlines what you plan to do each week to ensure timely completion of your capstone.

**Units 2, 4, and 5 Progress Reports** – In each unit, you will prepare a brief report of the status of your project, based on your plan. You may also submit parts of your project for feedback.

**Unit 3 Capstone Project Draft** – You will submit a draft of your capstone project for feedback on your progress toward demonstrating your program outcomes, based on the final Capstone Project and Presentation Scoring Guide.

**Unit 6 Capstone Project and Presentation** – You will submit your final Capstone Project and Presentation. You will deliver two work products to complete this project:

- **Written Report** – The final written project report will be a formal document prepared for the key stakeholders of your project. The structure and length of the document will vary according to the type of project being undertaken, but the report is expected to be substantial: approximately 20–40 pages in length.
- **Oral Presentation** – This formal oral presentation will be supported by a PowerPoint presentation including slides with notes. The oral presentation will be recorded using Adobe Connect, and uploaded to the MBA6900 courseroom for review by your colleagues and a formal review by the instructor. This presentation should be no more than 15–20 minutes in length and will serve to present all facets of the capstone project.

Appendix D contains the scoring guide rubric with grading criteria for your final capstone deliverable. Be sure to review the criteria often throughout your project to ensure you are fulfilling the expectations for demonstrating your program outcomes.

## Appendix A – Proposal Rough Draft Template

Element	Description
Target Organization	Identify the organization that will be the setting or focus of the project.
Brief Project Description	Describe the project in sufficient detail that the instructor can get a good understanding of what you propose to do.
Access and Data Availability	Describe what access you have to this organization and your sources of data.
<b>Program Outcomes</b>	
Apply foundational knowledge and an understanding of business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines.	Describe how the proposed project will enable you to demonstrate your achievement of this outcome.
Integrate information across disciplines and from differing perspectives.	Describe how the proposed project will enable you to demonstrate your achievement of this outcome.
Lead and collaborate in virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments.	Describe how the proposed project will enable you to demonstrate your achievement of this outcome.
Integrate principles of ethics and integrity into business decisions.	Describe how the proposed project will enable you to demonstrate your achievement of this outcome.
Estimate expected length.	Estimate the length, in double-spaced pages, of the deliverable you expect to produce.

You may use the above table and merely replace the instructions in the Description column with your entries. Or, if you prefer, you may prepare a document in an alternative format that addresses all of the entries shown in the table.

## Appendix B – Sample Proposal Rough Draft

Element	Description
Target Organization	R. D. Tech, Inc.
Brief Project Description	The project will be a comprehensive case study of this manufacturer of stainless steel processing equipment for the food and dairy industry.
Access and Data Availability	I am employed by R. D. Tech and have permission to gather the required data. In the actual case document, the company name will be disguised.
<b>Program Outcomes</b>	
Apply foundational knowledge and an understanding of business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines.	The case study will cover all organizational components and functions, including marketing, operations, finance, and administration. It will examine the company's upstream and downstream supply chain, and the information and materials flows involved.
Integrate information across disciplines and from differing perspectives.	The case will examine the interrelationships among the different organizational functions in light of the challenges the company is facing. It will present the perspectives of major points of view, including the Marketing, Finance, and Operations teams, as well as senior Management.
Lead and collaborate in virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments.	The case will assess issues involved in the company's investigation of overseas market prospects, including the establishment of overseas branches.
Integrate principles of ethics and integrity into business decisions.	The company is considering a change to its full employment policy, as dairies in its local two-state area consolidate and it considers expansion abroad. The ethical issues of changing the implied contract with employees will be examined as part of the case.
Estimate expected length.	Approximately 35–45 pages, double-spaced.

### Appendix C – Proposal Content and Format

**Introduction** – In this section, identify the organization and whether you have access to it directly. Describe the exact nature of the project you propose to do and why you want to do this particular project.

- Target organization.
- Nature of the project.
- Rationale for the project.

**Outcome Demonstration** – Describe how this project will allow you to demonstrate each MBA program outcome. The four section titles below refer to the outcomes that are listed in *the Prospectus Template*.

- Apply foundational knowledge.
- Integrate information.
- Lead and collaborate.
- Integrate principles.

**Data Sources** – Identify where you will get the data needed to complete the project, whether via direct access to the organization or via published sources. Be as detailed as possible, since the instructor must evaluate whether you have access to enough data to make the project feasible.

**Projected Timeline** – Provide a timeline for the project, to be completed no later than the end of your final course. Tasks should include any preliminary activity needed to get permissions (if needed), data gathering, data analysis, report writing, presentation preparation, and anything else that would form a significant part of the work needed to complete the project.

## Appendix D – Capstone Project and Presentation Grading Criteria

Criterion	Non-performance	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<b>Apply foundational knowledge and an understanding of business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines.</b>	References but does not apply fundamental, practical foundational knowledge and a functional understanding of business systems, processes, and technology.	Applies fundamental, practical foundational knowledge and a functional understanding of a limited set of business systems, processes, and technology within but not across core disciplines.	Applies foundational knowledge (theories, models, and practices) and an understanding of core business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines.	Applies a balance of theoretical and practical foundational knowledge (theories, models, and practices) and an in-depth understanding of a full range of business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines. Recognizes and justifies approach to integrating foundational knowledge, business systems, processes, and technology within and across core disciplines.
<b>Integrate information across disciplines from differing perspectives.</b>	Analyzes information from a singular discipline or perspective or poorly analyzes information across disciplines from few differing primary functional perspectives.	Analyzes but does not integrate limited information (data, insights, best practices) across disciplines from few differing primary functional perspectives individually but not holistically.	Integrates most relevant supportive and conflicting information (data, insights, best practices) across disciplines from differing primary functional perspectives individually and holistically.	Evaluates supportive and conflicting information (data, insights, best practices) integrating insights across disciplines from multiple, diverse functional and strategic perspectives individually and holistically.
<b>Develop logical, well-supported, evidence-based solutions to business challenges and opportunities.</b>	Develops unsupported (emotional testimonials, anecdotes, lack of evidence) solutions and solutions that are not logically connected to business challenges and opportunities.	Develops unsupported (emotional testimonials, anecdotes, lack of evidence) solutions or solutions that are not logically connected to business challenges and opportunities.	Develops logical, well-supported, solutions based on relevant, sound, logical, and credible evidence (data, insights, analyses, best practices) to solve business challenges and opportunities.	Develops logical, well-supported, solutions based on relevant, sound, logical, and credible evidence (data, insights, analyses, best practices) to systematically solve business challenges and opportunities relevant to all applicable stakeholders and cross-functional departments.

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<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Non-performance</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<b>Apply innovative, strategic, and sustainable approaches to business practice and planning.</b>	Does not apply or poorly applies elements of innovative, strategic, and sustainable approaches to business practice and planning.	Applies some elements of innovative, strategic, and sustainable approaches to business practice and planning.	Applies innovative, strategic, and sustainable (long-term) approaches to business practice and planning.	Integrates and justifies innovative, strategic, and sustainable (long-term) approaches business practice and planning that appropriately challenge the status quo while recognizing change management implications.
<b>Assess leadership and collaboration opportunities in virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments.</b>	Does not describe or poorly describes leadership or collaboration strategies.	Describes leadership and collaboration principles and strategies that may or may not be appropriate to virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments.	Applies leadership and collaboration principles and strategies for virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments.	Assesses leadership and collaboration principles, strategies, and opportunities in virtual, global, and culturally diverse environments and integrates flexible perspectives and collaborative approaches in business.
<b>Integrate principles of ethics and integrity into business decisions.</b>	Does not assess or poorly assesses principles of ethics and integrity.	Assesses principles of ethics and integrity by analyzing ethical implications but may overlook important ethical considerations.	Integrates principles of ethics and integrity into business decisions by assessing ethical implications and resolving ethical conflicts and dilemmas.	Integrates principles of ethics and integrity into business decisions by assessing ethical implications, resolving ethical conflicts and dilemmas, and making right and just decisions for the organization and the larger business community.
<b>Communicate clearly and effectively in a business environment.</b>	Does not communicate appropriately in a business environment.	Communicates in a business environment with heavy jargon and inconsistent application of professional speaking, effective presentation, and persuasion skills to create an unconvincing case for business solutions.	Communicates clearly and effectively in a business environment by applying professional speaking, effective presentation, and persuasion skills to create a clear and compelling case for business solutions.	Communicates clearly and effectively in a business environment by adapting to specific audiences' knowledge/needs, utilizing presentation best practices, and integrating persuasion with cross-functional stakeholders to create a clear and compelling case for business solutions.