

Capstone Handbook

# Master of Science in Nutrition – Dietetic Internship



**Idaho State  
University**

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**Nutrition  
and Dietetics**

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# General Information

The Capstone Project is the culminating academic experience for the MS in Nutrition graduate program. The scope and presentation of the Capstone Project must demonstrate the student's skills in a variety of areas including, formal academic and technical writing, the research process, and the application of nutrition principles in the public health arena.

MS students must complete a Capstone Project reflective of 6 credit hours to meet graduation requirements.

## Capstone Project

The Capstone Project must demonstrate your mastery of nutrition skills and concepts. The Capstone Project proposal requires approval from the student's Capstone Project advisor, who may be a different faculty member than the student's primary Dietetic Programs advisor.

The final Capstone Project document is submitted to members of a Capstone Project Committee for final approval.

We want to make this Handbook as helpful as possible for students. Please let us know your feedback on this Handbook:

- Are there parts that are unclear?
- Did you find a typo?
- Is there information that is missing?

Send an email to Cynthia Blanton, PhD, RD, LD, with your feedback: [cynthiablanton@isu.edu](mailto:cynthiablanton@isu.edu)

Thanks!

# Capstone Project

Capstone Projects allow students to apply nutrition skills and concepts and further develop competencies essential to dietetics practice. Project topics and formats are varied and allow students the flexibility to investigate salient nutrition topics under the guidance of their Capstone Project committee chair—usually also serves as the Capstone Project advisor. Many students take advantage of the opportunity to dovetail a work project.

Examples of formats or designs for the Capstone Project are detailed below. Other Capstone Project options that are not listed below are possible. However, these alternative formats must be approved by the student’s Capstone Committee Chair and faculty advisor.

## Examples of Capstone Projects

OPTION	DESCRIPTION
Grant Writing and Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, write, and submit a grant application for a nutrition-related initiative</li> <li>Final document includes a copy of the written grant application (various narrative parts and the proposed budget)</li> <li>Oral defense includes overview of the grant application process, as well as the proposed initiative</li> </ul>
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary analysis of existing dataset, such as NHANES</li> <li>Final document includes research question, methodology followed, findings and implications of those findings for practice</li> <li>Oral defense includes overview of the final document</li> </ul>
Mini-research Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conceptualize research question, collect data, and analyze findings</li> <li>Final document includes research question, methodology followed, findings and implications of those findings for practice</li> <li>Oral defense includes overview of the final document</li> </ul>
Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of the peer-reviewed literature on an important public health nutrition problem, employing the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ Evidence Analysis Library protocol for reviewing and grading the literature</li> <li>Final document may be a manuscript or poster</li> <li>Oral defense includes overview of literature review process, as well as the key findings</li> </ul>
Interprofessional Care Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of role of RDN on interprofessional health care team for specific nutrition intervention</li> <li>Final document may be a manuscript or poster</li> <li>Oral defense includes overview of literature review process, as well as the key findings</li> </ul>
Program Evaluation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of an evaluation plan of an existing public health nutrition program</li> <li>Final document must include data collection instructions and protocols, and analytical guidelines</li> <li>Oral defense includes overview of program evaluation, as well as key findings</li> </ul>
Policy Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of the nutrition implications of a current or proposed state or federal legislation or policy (e.g., reimbursement for RDN services)</li> <li>Final document must include perspectives on economics and financing, need and demand, politics/ethics/law, or quality/effectiveness</li> <li>Oral defense includes overview of policy development process, as well as key findings</li> </ul>

## General Steps

### **Capstone Project Identification**

Students are encouraged to think about a potential focus for their Capstone Project as soon as they are enrolled in the MS in Nutrition – Dietetic Internship program. This strategy lets you begin to do some legwork for the Capstone Project. For example, you might select topics for papers you do for other courses that are related to your Capstone Project.

Not sure what topic to focus on? Your academic advisor and other faculty in Dietetic Programs are good sounding boards for potential topics.

### **Formation of Capstone Project Committee**

See information below on formation of Capstone Project Committee. Once your topic is decided on you need to choose your committee members.

### **Topic Approval**

Students must select a Capstone Project topic no later than the beginning of the second semester of coursework.

### **Human Subjects Training**

If your Capstone Project involves surveying people, you must complete human subject training through the ISU Office of Research Integrity. The [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative \(CITI\)](#) is a web-based training program that addresses research with human subjects. This training will also explain additional steps you'll need to take to gain approval for conducting your research. Your advisor will inform you which training meets your project's requirements.

### **Final Project Preparation**

If the proposed Capstone Project involves human subjects, the student must submit an "Application to Involve Human Subjects in Research" or a "Certificate of Exemption Request" to the ISU Human Subjects Committee before data can be accessed, collected, and/or analyzed.

Information about submission of proposals to the HSC can be found on their website (<http://isuresearch.org/institutional-reviewboard-irb-also-known-as-human-subjects-committee>).

An online platform named Cayuse is used to submit and manage HSC proposals.

### **Final Project Document**

Capstone Project implementation and preparation of the final project document will be completed by the student under the guidance of the Capstone Project Committee Chair.

### **Final Project Defense**

After the final project document is completed, the student will present an overview of the project to the Capstone Project Committee for approval. The student will send the final project document to all Capstone Project Committee members at least two weeks before the project defense date, and will coordinate a meeting to present it orally. The defense will be presented via Zoom.

The defense takes about 1 ½ hours. This includes:

- Introductory remarks by Capstone Project Committee Chair: 5 minutes
- Candidate presentation: A 30 – 40-minute presentation is expected
- Capstone Project Committee questions and discussion with candidate: about 20 – 30 minutes
- Capstone Project Committee vote (candidate is placed in a Zoom waiting room): 5-10 minutes for the committee to discuss and vote on whether the student passes
- Report on committee vote and final remarks by Capstone Project Committee: 5-10 minutes

## Formation of the Capstone Project Committee

The Capstone Project Committee needs to be formalized when the student has chosen the topic.

The Capstone Project Committee consists of three members. All members of the Capstone Project Committee approve the final project document and oversee the final oral defense of the capstone project. The committee consists of Nutrition and Dietetics Department faculty\*.

The Capstone Project Committee Chair serves as the student's project advisor.

### **Project Committee Chair**

The Capstone Project Committee Chair is selected by the student under the guidance of the graduate faculty. The Chair is a Nutrition and Dietetics Department faculty member with a background in nutrition and dietetics, public health, and/or health education.

The Capstone Project Committee Chair guides the student through the project proposal development. This will involve multiple meetings, multiple paper submissions, numerous revisions, and etc.

### **Second and Third Project Committee Members**

The second and third project committee members are selected from Department faculty members by the student under the guidance of the project committee chair.

### **\*External Committee Members**

Committee members from outside the Nutrition and Dietetics Department are not required, however, if the nature of the student's project is such that in consultation with the Committee Chair, students may invite an external member to serve on the committee. External committee members are required to have relevant professional experience. External members may serve as the third member as directed by the Committee Chair.

<b>Responsibilities of Involved Parties</b>	
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops the project proposal and final project document under the guidance of the project committee chair</li> <li>• Coordinates with project committee members on the date, time and place of oral defense meetings</li> <li>• Distributes final project document to all committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting</li> </ul>
Project Committee Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides assistance and direction to the student during the project proposal development and final project preparation</li> <li>• Ensures that the project proposal and final project conform to the Department's project guidelines</li> <li>• Creates the defense Zoom meeting link</li> <li>• Conducts the final project defense meeting</li> <li>• Informs the student of the results of the final project defense and any recommendations from the committee</li> <li>• Submits vote immediately following defense, using method provided by the Department for the student</li> <li>• Informs the Nutrition and Dietetics Department Chair of the results of the final project defense</li> <li>• If necessary, submits a change of grade form to the Graduate School to remove incomplete status (IP) of project credits and to document satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) completion of project</li> </ul>
Second and Third Project Committee Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in the development of the project and provides feedback as requested, and is expected to attend all meetings of the total project committee</li> <li>• Are voting members of the committee</li> <li>• Submits vote immediately following defense, using method provided by the Department for the student</li> </ul>
External Committee Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in the development of the project and provides feedback as requested</li> <li>• Is a voting member of the committee</li> <li>• Submits vote immediately following defense, using method provided by the Department for the student</li> </ul>

## Final Document

### Final Project Document

The project document should be written in the format and bibliographic style of the current edition of the APA Publication Manual or other capstone advisor approved publication format. The document should be approximately 20-30 double-spaced pages of text, not including references, tables, and figures.