

# Capstone Outline Assignments

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ECON 490

Email: [tmackay@fullerton.edu](mailto:tmackay@fullerton.edu)

# Overview

In these slides, we'll talk about:

- Next steps for your capstone project proposals
- Requirements for the next capstone project assignment = capstone outlines

# Project Proposals

I will post grades and feedback for everyone's proposals over the next week

Remember that responding to feedback is a component of all course grades!

***NOTE: Before moving forward with your project, you will need approval on the topic and data source(s) – I may ask you to submit a revised proposal.***

# Several Important Notes

For all capstone-related questions, ***please use email***

- Canvas is buggy and unreliable → email ensures I'll see your questions

***I will not adjust or change proposal or outline grades***

- At this stage of the class, setting expectations is the priority
- The point of resubmissions is to ensure you pass the class

Proposal (and outline) grades are ***signal*** about future grades in the absence of improvement

- If they're low, it's a sign you need to shift gears...
- But your overall grade in the class ultimately depends on your final paper

# Capstone Outlines

Assignments page has a detailed description of outline requirements

Two Word documents posted to the Outline Canvas page:

- A blank outline template for you to use for your own submission
- An outline template with detailed instructions for each section of your outline

Make sure to review both files – template instructions serve as a grading checklist!

# Writing Your Capstone Outline

To complete your Outline, you'll fill in the blank template file I've provided

This includes:

- Research question (updated if needed from proposal) and a bit of motivation
- Some general discussion of relevant background knowledge
- Detailed discussion of your data analysis strategy and preliminary results

Key difference from proposal? ***For Outline, you need output from your regressions***

# Data Analysis Strategies

For the Outline, you'll provide updated description of your data analysis strategy

- Regression equations from proposal become 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stages of your analysis
- Remember, you want to “tell a story” – do you have enough to talk about?

For concrete suggestions, review “Capstone Data Analysis” slides

# Data Analysis Output

For your Outline, you'll provide draft versions of your data analysis output

- From the Capstone Data Analysis slides, this means 5+ tables and figures
- 1 table & 2 figures summarizing your data, then 2+ tables of regression results

These tables and figures are a key part of your Outline

- Each item should be clearly organized and labelled
- You should provide at least 1 table of actual regression output
- You can then include a mock table describing what you'd like to do next



# Formatting Your Tables and Figures

A useful general rule of thumb: *“Would I be comfortable sharing this table, figure, entire paper, etc. as part of a job or grad school application?”*

Tables and figures should be clear, organized, and professional

- Pay attention to requirements in detailed Outline instructions file
- I have provided sample table templates on Canvas
- We will review R code and strategies for producing regression tables

**KEY RULE: Do not use screenshots of R code, regression summaries, graphs, etc.!**

# Interpreting Your Data Analysis Output

For your 1<sup>st</sup> stage regression output (and all output for final paper), you should:

- Be able to interpret key coefficients
- Assess the *statistical significance* (i.e., is this just noise in the data?)
- Assess the *practical significance* (i.e., is that a large change in Y or not?)

The goal is to be conversational with your regression output

- Use `predict()`, transform your estimates, etc. to improve interpretability
- **Key Question:** What does your estimate tell us about your research question?

# Checklist Requirements

For each capstone assignment, I'll ask you to complete a checklist

- Triple check that you've completed each step!
- These checklists form the basis of my grading rubrics

Pay attention to context clues – do you see something repeated a lot? It matters!

As an example, you cannot include screenshotted output in your final papers

- Might seem like a small deal... but clean output is ***foundational*** to effective communication of data analysis – it's how you show what you know

# General Suggestions

Rounding up several recurring suggestions over the past month:

- Before doing anything else, make sure to review proposal feedback
- Leave plenty of time for data cleaning (it always takes longer than expected!)
- Start with your data analysis, then work backward to refine your question
- Ask yourself: "Do I have enough to write 2-3 pages about these results?"