

Fast Tracking the C769 Capstone

Western Governors University

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# Welcome

Hello! I’m glad you’ve made it to your C769 Capstone course and are excited to finish. This document is a condensed set of instructions about how to address the requirements for each of the eight sections. I’ve included examples for your review. Also included are suggestions based on my review of thousands of capstone project.

Before you begin this process, be sure you’ve had your project idea approved and the Capstone Approval form signed by a course instructor. You’ll upload it and the release form to Evaluations to complete Task 1. That submission must pass before you submit your Task 2 proposal, but you may start the proposal sooner.

A few pointers before you begin:

* Write this document in future tense.
* There is no first person in technical writing. A sentence like, “I installed the SIEM software without incident.” is not acceptable as it changes the focus from the project to you personally. The sentence should read, “JB Consulting installed the SIEM software without incident.” So, come up with a good client name and an entity that’s going to do the work.
* Important - Look ahead at the upcoming sections. For example, the phases you describe in the Implementation Plan should parallel the Methodology and the Objectives in the Goals section. Your description of the current project setting in the Problem Summary may also be repurposed for the Current Project Environment. Reuse material even though you’ll feel like you’re repeating yourself. Remember, the evaluator grades each section separately.
* Use a product like Grammarly (the free version) to check your work. You might want to have someone else review it for you but preferably not a 5-year-old who can’t spell “sneakers.” 😊
* Recommend page count in the template is just a recommendation. If you cover the requirements, don’t worry if your length is less than recommended.
* Be sure all content is double spaced and use a consistent font at a 12pt size. Be sure your headings match up with the Table of Contents. If you used the template that shouldn’t be a concern.
* Remember, your content might be good as gold but a few missing commas, missing or misused apostrophes, sentence run-ons, or sentence fragments will cause your submission not to pass. I read mostly for content and will not catch many of those issues. Review for grammatic errors before submitting.

# Proposal Overview

## Problem Summary

Start your proposal by describing the client, the project’s setting, and the problem. Give the client a believable name if it’s fictional and a location. Include information about the technical structure of where the project will take place. These descriptions will help the evaluator visualize where your project will take place. Then summarize the problem in the context of that setting. Provide sufficient background information so that the reader can appreciate the need for a solution.

## IT Solution

Describe the scope of the proposed IT solution. Include details about your project that might include: equipment, software, programming languages, database types, etc. Clearly identify the relationship between the solution and the problem you mentioned in the previous section.

## Implementation Plan

This section should contain the details of an implementation plan. The easiest way to do this is to list each phase of the project and what aspects of the scope fit into those phases. Provide details about how the project will be carried out and why it will be carried out in that manner. This will seem similar to the IT Solution but the idea here is to describe the sequencing as opposed to just the project’s scope.

Why this doesn’t pass! As long as you make the connection between the setting, problem and proposed solution with sufficient detail (as mentioned above) this section does well. Mix up the content, leave out the subheadings, or provide generic content and there could be problems.

# Review of Other Work

The easiest way to approach the Review of Other Work**is to break your project into key components and then look for sources relating to those elements.** Y**ou don’t need to find sources that parallel your entire project or are case studies. Just look for those that support “pieces” of the project.**Obviously, the Internet is a great place to search for things like best practices, white papers, tech blogs, etc. Almost anything that’s publicly accessible is valid including YouTube videos. Remember, you need to describe with details how each source supports the proposed project. I’m attaching a document that will help with the APA formatting.

Here is one partial example:

 Based on the overwhelming evidence that secure remote access would greatly enhance AJB’s ability to meet their clients’ needs and improve their overall security stance, perhaps the next logical question might be, “How?”  The experts interviewed by Alexander (2016) suggested a slow, methodical approach (p. 50).  Alexander states, “Instead of throwing out everything they know and diving in head first, experts emphasize the need for organizations to really think things through and ask the right questions.” The IT Team for AJB used this article to develop a more formal approach to determining the needs of the project…

And here’s another partial example using a block quote technique:

The importance in reducing downtime to Rocket Medical Clinic in a disaster scenario seems apparent, but the level of that importance required the Reliable Bit Consulting staff to look at the impact downtime has across other small and medium sized businesses. They located a recent story published in TechRepublic centered around the effects of ransomware on small to medium sized businesses. The author, Vigliarolo, (2017), found the following:

A new report from Malwarebytes has revealed how devastating ransomware can be for small and medium businesses—35% were hit by ransomware in the past 12 months, and one in six of those experienced more than 25 hours of downtime…

Note: If you include with each source how that source relates to the proposed project, go ahead and delete the **Relation of Artifacts to Project Development**subheading. Be sure to include details and your client’s name often. 😊

Why this doesn’t pass! The evaluator will look for three things: 1. A nicely detailed summary of each source. 2. A description of how each source specifically relates to the proposed project. Something like, “This article’s description of the API will also benefit the project for the client.” is not enough detail. Why will it benefit project and the client? 3. Correct APA citation that matches the full citation in the References section.

# Project Rationale

Up next is the Project Rationale. This should be a breeze. Come up with 4-6 reasons why the project is necessary. Start with a brief paragraph that re-introduces the project. Follow that with reasons why the project is important or will benefit the client. Use a separate paragraph for each reason. It is fine to reuse some of the material from previous sections. The evaluator grades each section separately. Remember: you are looking to justify your project. So, include things like timing, budget considerations, and company goals. Industry trends, known infrastructure or system issues, and consequences if the project isn’t completed are also important.

Why this doesn’t pass! This is one of the easiest sections to write and pass if you clearly describe the reasons for the project. Another way to look at it is, “How will the project benefit the client?” Make those reasons as obvious as possible with an explanation that makes it unique to the project.

# Current Project Environment

 For the Current Project Environment, you need to describe where the project will take place. The technical environment prior to the project being implemented. This will seem like a repeat because you probably already mentioned it in previous sections. Just repurpose the material into a summary paragraph or two. Here, technical details are a big plus so avoid general statements like, “There are three servers…” and go with, “There are three servers running Microsoft Server 2016 on VMWare virtualized Dell blade XXXX...” If your project starts from scratch such as a new software application, website, or network install describe what current tools are available to complete the task. Stay focused on providing information about the technical environment.

Why this doesn’t pass! The lack of specific project details is the major demise of this section. If you fill it with generic statements that would fit almost any project of that type it’ll have problems. Think “specifics” here and provide the details that make the project unique.

# Methodology

The Methodology must include a standard project management method (PMLC, JPACE, SDLC, ADDIE, etc.). Pick the method that best fits your project (or you can adapt it to) then give a brief description of how it works. Next, you must explain how your project will be managed in each of the phases of that method. I recommend a separate paragraph for each phase to make it easier for the evaluator to spot. This is straightforward. Pick a method, describe it, then describe how your project will be guided by it. The more project-specific details you provide here the easier it will be when you get to writing your final report. Look back at what you did for the Implementation Plan.

Why this doesn’t pass! Just like the Current Project Environment, you’ll need project specifics. This section will do very well if you use the paragraph format for the introductory part and then each phase of the project. It’s not so important to pick the perfect methodology so don’t overthink that part. The evaluator will look for an industry standard methodology and then how your project fits into its phases. I don’t see this section not passing because the evaluator thought the methodology was wrong for the project.

# Project Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables

The Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables section provides details about how the project will be completed so you’ll need to understand the terms. I’m attaching a document that looks at how to distinguish between them. The most important part is to make sure the evaluator can see a clear hierarchy between the three elements. **Remember that your Implementation Plan and Methodology include phases that should support this section.** There are two subsections and you start with the first described below.

For the **Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables Table,** you’ll specify how the hierarchy between the three elements works. The goal is the overarching description of what will happen and why. Objectives are the projects required to satisfy the goal. Deliverables are the tasks/job performed to complete an objective. Shoot for 1 goal and at least 4 objectives. Remember, each objective should have at least 2 deliverables.

For the **Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables Descriptions,** you’ll provide detailed information about all the project components you identified in the table. You may do that in a paragraph format but a modified outline is easier and enables to evaluator to spot things quickly. **Here’s a partial example:**

**Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables Description**

This project’s main goal is to establish a secure, scalable, and reliable network connectivity between two locations owned by PTH Insurance Inc. to enable the client’s database to be accessible to all employees. This will ensure PTH agents deliver an effective experience to their clients. This goal will be met by the successful completion of the following five objectives:

·         Objective 1: Understand the current client environment by assessing the physical, cultural, and external environmental factors that could potentially affect connectivity issues. The assessment will examine office locations for existing technology and staffing requirements. This objective will be considered successful when all assessments are completed and a client approved scope statement, including assumptions and known risks, is produced. The following deliverables identify the required task:

o   Deliverable 1: Complete walkthrough and physical assessment of each PTH location. Final outcome will be a current state design document for each location.

o   Deliverable 2: Meet with agents and management at both locations to gather assumptions and identify additional constraints. It’s important that the active players in the project have an opportunity to provide input, thus enhancing the design effort.

Deliverable 4: Complete the scope statement. Create the project scope statement using the customer provided Statement of Work (SOW), assumptions list, and current state design documents. This document focuses the project’s scope to reduce excessive scope creep.

Why this doesn’t pass! The evaluator looks for the hierarchy and a logical flow of tasks that appear to line up with the project. They don’t question if an objective should really be a deliverable or goal. So, consider how your project should take place and incorporate what you did in the Implementation Plan and Methodology. The modified outline format is a big, BIG plus because it makes it easier for the evaluator to spot what you’ve done. You can chuck it all into paragraphs but why bother as you want to make this as easy for the evaluator as possible? 😊

# Project Timeline with Milestones

This section goes very quickly if you’ve done your deliverables correctly. For the timeline, just chuck those deliverables in the Timeline table provided in the template. Then add durations plus appropriate start and end dates (They must be in the future as this is a proposed project.).

Why this doesn’t pass! Two things must happen here: 1. Each deliverable from the goals section must be present in the timeline table. You may combine them, but they must all be present. 2. All dates must be in the future – but I’ve already stated that. The dates are make believe – proposal dates in the future because the project hasn’t taken place yet and the final report dates in the recent past because the project is now completed.

# Outcome

For this section you’ll find you’ve already written much of the information elsewhere in the document. To start, you need to describe how the project will benefit the client. Think in terms of immediate improvements and those more long-term. Then provide at least one **measurable metric that will determine the project’s success**. Explain what will be measured and what measurement indicates success. You’ll need a quantifiable amount. A statement like this does NOT work: “This project will be considered successful when most of the Rockets R Us salesforce can successfully access the local sales database.” A statement like this DOES work: “This project will be considered successful when 95% of the Rockets R Us salesforce can successfully access the local sales database.” Use a measurable value and make it easy to spot.

Why this doesn’t pass! This one is pretty simple. You’ll have problems with this section if you don’t describe the short- and long-term benefits or provide a measurable metric this section might have some problems.

# References

List all the outside sources that appear as in-text citations in the body of the document. The in-text citation must match up with the full citation below. Look at the following example:

In-text citation in the body of the text:

(Bernstein, 2002) or this might also appear as, “In an article by Bernstein (2002)..”

Full citation in this Reference section:

Bernstein, M. (2002). *10 tips on writing the living Web. A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites, 149.* Retrieved from http://www.alistapart.com/articles/writeliving

Use a hanging indent (first line left-justified and all other lines indented) for all your citations.

Why this doesn’t pass! A couple of things to watch here: 1. Citations are not APA formatted. 2. You don’t have in-text citations for each reference source or vice versa. Be sure those match up!!!

Note: You don’t need to provide appendix items for the proposal. However, you may if it helps enhance your document. Be sure to update the Table of Contents based on what you decide.

**And that’s it. Be sure to send me drafts, either as you complete each section or once you’ve completed the entire proposal. I’m always, ALWAYS glad to review your work. You’ll find my turnaround time to be exceptional (I’m not bragging) as I’m very excited to see you finish this and move onto the final report. I do have excellent resources for completing the final report so be sure to check with me. 😊**