

Yale-NUS College

Capstone Thesis

Guidelines & Regulations

AY2019/2020

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1. Mission/objectives of capstone

The Yale-NUS curriculum culminates in an original capstone project which all students undertake with the guidance of Yale-NUS faculty and other subject matter experts. In the capstone program, students hone the disciplinary and general intellectual skills necessary to conceive, design and execute a year-long, self-directed project within their major. The program requires every student to engage with research in their discipline, to produce scholarship across appropriate formats, and to communicate their results to a variety of audiences. By completing their capstone work, students demonstrate independence, creativity and critical analysis.

2. Format

The Capstone Project is a two-semester module worth a total of 10 MC's over the last year of the 4- or (for DDP Law) 5- year course. It allows students the opportunity to pursue, in depth, an advanced project of their own choosing, while working closely with a faculty supervisor. Students will work on an advanced creative and/or research or experiential project that integrates skills from the Common Curriculum and learning in the major. The Capstone Project will culminate in a substantial piece of work that reflects a deep engagement with the topic.

3. Selection and scope of project

Faculty can make suggestions based on identified student interest, or circulate a list of available topics. Students can also suggest their own topics – the most appropriate means for determining topics will vary from major to major. The Capstone project may be part of a larger effort undertaken by the faculty supervisor and others, but the Capstone must be clearly identified as a separate intellectual entity within that broader project.

Students should choose a topic which they find compelling and for which they have developed sufficient competence through prior academic work or experience. While the supervisor will be a guide, the students will work largely on their own.

As the Capstone Project is equivalent to a 10 MC module, students should plan and supervisors should expect the student to spend at least as much time and energy on the Capstone Project as would be devoted to one 5 MC module per semester, i.e., an average of 12.5 hours of work per week. While workloads may vary between projects and within a project as it develops, projects that require either substantially more or substantially less effort should be restructured. Both students and supervisors are responsible for keeping the Capstone project to an appropriate scope.

4. Definitions and responsibilities

4.1 Head of Studies/Designate/Capstone Coordinator

Any reference to “Head of Studies” will mean the Head of Studies OR the person designated by the Head of Studies to undertake his/her responsibilities OR another faculty who is identified as the Capstone Coordinator for that major. The Head of Studies will submit a list of the capstone project titles and supervisors from his/her major to Registry no later than the end of Week 6, Semester 1. He/She is responsible for approving external supervisors and appointing co-supervisors; resolving any dispute or problems related to the capstone project; submitting the interim grade (indicating IP/Unsatisfactory) report form to Registry at the end of Semester 1; designing the assessment rubric for the major; collating all the students’ final grades to be submitted to Registry; mediating any other issues as outlined in this document.

4.2 Supervisors and co-supervisors

Every capstone project must have a supervisor who is typically a faculty member in Yale-NUS College. With the approval of the Head of Studies, the supervisor may be from outside Yale-NUS. In this case, the student will be assigned a separate faculty member from Yale-NUS to serve as Co-supervisor.

DDP Law and Liberal Arts students will have Co- Supervisors from the Faculty of Law and Yale-NUS College.

4.3 Responsibilities of the supervisor

The supervisor will work with the student throughout the project. He/she will help the student refine the project goals and objectives, devise a methodology, as well as set up a timeline to help the student stay on track. The supervisor should guide the student through the project by answering questions, suggesting avenues to investigate, commenting on the current state and progress of the project, and assisting with relevant resources applicable to the project. Together with another examiner, the supervisor is also responsible for assessing the capstone module and giving the final grade.

4.4 Responsibilities of the co-supervisor

If the supervisor is not a Yale-NUS faculty member, then the internal Yale-NUS co-supervisor will keep in contact with the external supervisor and the student on a periodic basis to ensure that the external supervisor is meeting his/her responsibilities toward the student and that the student is making satisfactory progress on the project.

4.5 Responsibilities of the student

Students have the following responsibilities with respect to their capstone project. They must communicate regularly with their supervisor and share any problems encountered as early as possible. They must respect deadlines. They must complete the reflective self-evaluation at the end of Semester 1. They must at all times, treat ethics guidelines and scholarly integrity with the utmost seriousness. They must provide a clear justification for any funds requested, and use these funds ethically.

4.6 Process for Resolution of disputes/problems

If any dispute or problem arises, the Head of Studies should be informed as soon as possible so that it can be resolved. In the event the the Head of Studies cannot resolve the dispute, then s/he may seek the assistance of the Divisional Directors with input from the Associate Dean of Faculty (Curriculum). In all such circumstances, the resolution should take into account the best interests of the student and should be resolved speedily.

5. Project framework and guidelines

- a) Students may start discussions with the HOS and potential supervisors during their junior year. However formal enrolment in the Capstone Project module takes place at the beginning of the final year, prior to the end of the second week.
- b) The supervisor is a faculty member of Yale-NUS or someone approved by the Head of Studies. If the supervisor is external to Yale-NUS, a faculty member of Yale-NUS will be appointed as co-supervisor.
- c) At the end of Semester 1, students will submit their self-assessment via Canvas for supervisor and HoS endorsement. Each major can decide on the format of this Semester 1 report although a suggested format is also available. A grade of IP will be recorded based on the supervisor's endorsement and an assessment determined by the Head of Studies which will then be submitted to Registry. Students who have not made satisfactory progress should be advised by the supervisor and Head of Studies on steps to take in Semester 2 to fulfil the requirements of the project.
- d) Depending on the design of the project, students will submit a formal thesis or some other piece(s) of work in the second semester.
- e) Depending on the major and project, viva voce style presentations may take different forms and be graded as determined by the supervisor and Head of Studies. If these are required, then they should be completed before the end of Week 13 in Semester 2.
- f) Grading of the final project will be done by the supervisor and another examiner independently and the final grade will be the average of the two grades or as mutually

determined by the supervisor and examiner. If the two grades differ by more than two grade steps or a mutually satisfactory grade cannot be determined, a third examiner will be appointed by the Head of Studies (or the Divisional Director, if the HOS is the original supervisor/examiner) to assess the project and determine the final grade in consultation with the Divisional Director or HOS.

- g) The format used for the overall grading of the capstone project will be designed by each major but should be recorded on forms submitted to the Head of Studies who will be responsible for collating all the grades and determining all the students' final grades to be submitted to Registry.
- h) Where necessary, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the project follows the College's guidelines on ethical standards of research for undergraduates.
- i) Policy on Failure – Any student who receives a final grade of D in the Capstone project will have to satisfactorily complete a remediation process to be confirmed by the supervisor and Head of Studies before the student is allowed to graduate. Upon successful remediation, the grade will be changed to a C. Remediation will be undertaken during the long vacation under the supervision of the supervisor and the final remediation report/thesis submitted by the end of the third week of June so that the decision on the remediation is available by mid-July. Any student who receives a final grade of F or fails the remediation will have to re-do the whole capstone project before being allowed to graduate. Such students will re-enrol for one more semester at the College and register for the Repeat Capstone module by Week 2 of Semester 1 or Semester 2 if the student decides to take a leave of absence for one semester before re-enrolling. The Repeat Capstone module will also carry 10MC's but has to be completed within the one semester and the student will be working on the project full-time. The deadline for submission of the final report/thesis will be Week 11 of the Semester and grading procedures will be the same as for the normal Capstone project.
- j) Late submission policy – Any final thesis/report that is submitted after the end of Week 11 of Semester 2 will be subject to penalties as described in the *Submission of Capstone Report Guidelines* document. However, students with Assistant Dean of Students' note, or a Medical Certificate will not receive any grade penalty. Where there are other extenuating circumstances as recognized by the Head of Studies, the penalties will not apply until the agreed period of extension has been exceeded.
- k) Academic integrity – Students should conduct all work on the capstone project according to the policy on academic integrity that is part of the academic regulations of the College. Any violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to the disciplinary policies and procedures of the College and may result in required remediation of the project prior to graduation.

- I) The year-long Capstone module is offered in Semester 1 of each Academic Year for all majors. In order not to be out of sequence for the capstone module, it is highly recommended that all capstone projects should be completed within Semesters 1 and 2 of any academic year. In the event that a student has taken a leave of absence in a previous semester and will be scheduled to graduate one semester later than the students of the admitted cohort (at the end of Semester 1 of the following AY instead of Semester 2 of the current AY), the student will still register for the capstone project in August (Semester 1) of his/her penultimate year so that the project can be completed the following April/May (Semester 2). After which, the student will continue for one more semester in the following August (Semester 1) in order to take additional modules required to graduate. Students in such circumstances will need to propose an academic plan at least three weeks (start of Round 3 of the Module Registration Exercise) before the start of Semester 1 of his/her penultimate year supported by the HOS and approved by the Capstone Committee. However, if for some extenuating reasons, a student is unable to register the capstone project in Semester 1 and is requesting for an out of sequence registration to register the capstone project in Semester 2, the student must indicate in the academic plan with substantive reasons for why the student cannot start in Semester 1 of the penultimate year. All requests must be submitted to the HOS with an academic plan supported by the supervisor and will be adjudicated by an ad hoc Committee at the beginning of Semester 1 or any other relevant time. The decision made by the Capstone Committee will be final. The Capstone Committee will be chaired by the Associate Dean of Faculty (Curriculum) with the Head of Studies and relevant Divisional Director as members.

6. Late Submission Penalty

Any late submission without a valid medical certificate or an Assistant Dean Notes (AD Notes) will be subjected to the following penalties to be deducted from the final grade of the Capstone Thesis. The Capstone Thesis due date for students is by 5:00 pm (1700hrs) on Friday, 3rd April 2020

- Deduct one third of a letter grade (for example, A to A-, B+ to B) if submitted between 5:01 pm (1701hrs) to 11:59 pm (2359hrs) on Saturday, 4th April 2020;
- Deduct *another* one third of a letter grade (e.g. A to B+, B+ to B-) if submitted over the following two days (between 12 midnight (0000hrs) of Sunday, 5th April 2020 to 11:59 pm (2359hrs) of Monday, 6th April 2020;

- Deduct one full letter grade (e.g. A to B, B+ to C+) if submitted between 12 midnight (0000hrs) of Tuesday, 7th April 2020 and 11:59 pm (2359hrs) of Friday, 10th April 2020;
- If the submission time is late by more than a week (from 12 midnight (0000hrs) of Saturday, 11th April 2020 onwards, the thesis will receive a failing grade of F.

7. Timeline

Heads of Studies are responsible for the timely submission of materials to Registry, as stipulated in Appendix 1.

8. Presentation of capstone work in the Residential Colleges

Within each residential college, Rectors or their designates will provide opportunities over the course of the year for students to present their capstone work to their peers in an informal setting. These events may take the form of, for example, a poster show, or short verbal presentations. These activities should be neither compulsory nor subject to grading. Their aim is to provide opportunities for feedback, for practicing communication skills to a non-specialist audience, and to promote cohort bonding.

9. Grading

At the end of Semester 1, a grade of IP will be recorded based on an assessment by the supervisor. Depending on the design of the project, students will submit a formal thesis or other written work at the end of Semester 2 and will generally make a presentation or exhibit of some kind, the nature of which will be determined by the individual major. The final project will be assessed by the supervisor and another examiner, and the overall grading of the Capstone module will be as defined by the major as presented in the description of the Capstones of the individual major. The final grade will be submitted to the Registry by the Head of Studies.

10. Funding/resources

Students can make use of all the resources available from ERT and elsewhere within Yale-NUS College. Each student can apply for up to S\$100 of funding to support their Capstone project with receipts to be submitted after the submission of the Capstone thesis. Students may apply for additional funds from the HoS based on the specific needs of the Capstone project (e.g. for field work, lab supplies, or artist materials).

External support or funding must be declared to the Heads of Studies and is subject to further approval.

11. Student preparation

Each major will have individualized preparation requirements and these should be shared with students in Year 3.

12. Prizes for completed projects

Where there is an outstanding capstone project in a major, a prize will be awarded. The highest scoring projects will be considered by the Head of Studies and faculty. One, and in exceptional circumstances a maximum of two, capstone project(s) may be chosen based on scholarly merit, originality and contribution to the field of study. In years where no capstone within a major is truly outstanding, no prize should be awarded.

13. Feedback and Evaluation

Students will perform a self-evaluation at the end of each Semester, and will be asked to share feedback on their Capstone experience, including interaction and mentorship from their Supervisors. Heads of Studies may also wish to discuss the capstone projects with major affiliated faculty to identify and share innovative and effective practices and address difficulties/challenges. Additionally, post-graduation, students will also be requested to give feedback on the impact of their capstone project experience on their career or further studies.

Timeline of Activities for Capstone AY2019/2020

These are deadlines. All forms/reports can be submitted earlier.

Semester 1 AY2019/2020

Deadline	Activity
Week 3 26 th – 30 th Aug 2019	<p>HoS will receive the updated “Student Registration List” from the Registry which indicates the students who are registered in Capstone module for the AY.</p> <p>Based on this list, HoS will request students to complete the <i>Capstone Proposal Form</i> and ensure that a supervisor is assigned to each student. A Yale-NUS co-supervisor is required if the primary supervisor is not a Yale-NUS faculty member.</p>
Week 6 20 th Sep 2019	<p>Students to submit the completed Capstone Proposal Form to HoS who will retain it for record purpose.</p> <p>HoS to submit the “Student Registration List” with assigned supervisors to the Registry.</p>
Week 5 9 th Sep 2019 to Week 6 20 th Sep 2019	<p>Students will receive an e-notification to complete an online Capstone Funding Application Form for submission by 20th Sep 2019. The student should route the form to the supervisor and then to HoS for approval.</p> <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student can apply for a budget of up to S\$100 for approval by the supervisor and HoS • Budget application of above S\$100 and requests for overseas travel will need approval by the HoS and Division Director • Refer to Instructions for Capstone Funding and Claims for details
Week 13 11 th – 15 th Nov 2019	<p>Students to complete the online Capstone Evaluation for semester 1.</p> <p>ERT will send a reminder to all students to complete an online student evaluation on Capstone. HoS to encourage students to fill this in and emphasize the confidentiality of the feedback.</p>
Week 12 4 th Nov 2019 To Week 14 22 nd Nov 2019	Students to complete Capstone Progress Form (Part 1) for semester 1 via Canvas

Semester 2 AY2019/2020

Week 11 3 rd Apr 2020 5pm	<p>Student submits capstone thesis by 5pm of Friday, 3rd April 2020</p> <p>Important: Grade penalty will apply for late submission. Please refer to <i>Submission of Capstone Thesis Format Guidelines</i>.</p> <p>A softcopy of the thesis, in pdf format only, is to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) uploaded on to Canvas: once for your graders and on a second page in high resolution, for the library's Capstone Repository. You will find detailed instructions for completing this task on the Canvas pageb) emailed to assigned printer (to be appointed in January 2020) <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Student's Declaration of Personal Work</i> form should be included in the Capstone thesis.
Week 12 6 th Apr 2020 to 10 th Apr 2020	<p>Student submits hardcopy of the <i>Request for Payment Form</i> (RFP) for capstone claims to their supervisors / co-supervisors for certification by Friday, 10th Apr '20</p> <p>Note: For more information, refer to <i>Guidelines for Submitting Capstone Funding Claims</i>.</p>
Week 12 6 th Apr '20 to 10 th Apr '20	<p>Student completes the online End of Sem 2 – Capstone Evaluation.</p> <p>ERT will send a reminder to all students to complete an online student evaluation on Capstone. HoS to encourage students to fill this in and emphasize the confidentiality of the feedback.</p>
Week 13 13 th Apr 2020	<p>Students to submit signed RFP form and supporting documents to the Division Manager for compilation for onward submission to the Finance Department for processing.</p>