

**MSW Program  
Capstone Project  
Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Department of Social Work**

## **Purpose**

The concentration year Capstone Project provides Masters of Social Work (MSW) students with the opportunity to integrate and apply previous learning (academic and field) through the creation and implementation of a project at their practicum agency in order to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge, skills, ethics and values necessary for evidence-based advanced generalist social work practice. The Capstone Project also gives students the opportunity to contribute to the knowledge-base of the profession and to develop and enhance professional presentation skills through the creation and delivery of a poster presentation describing the project.

## **Capstone Project Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of the Capstone Project students will have met the following learning objectives:

- 1) Design, implement and evaluate an evidence-based direct or indirect practice intervention within the context of the practice setting (1.3, 1.9C, 3.4C).
- 2) Critically analyze and understand the ethical issues associated with conducting direct or indirect practice intervention and evaluation within the context of the practice setting (1.8C, 2.4C).
- 3) Critically analyze and understand the issues associated with populations-at-risk and/or diverse groups as they pertain to conducting a direct or indirect practice intervention and evaluation within the context of the practice setting (1.8C, 2.4C).
- 4) Critically analyze and understand the interconnections between social work practice, theory, research, and policy (1.8C, 3.3C).
- 5) Develop and present a professional-level poster presentation (4.1).

## **Capstone Project Description**

The Capstone Project is an integrative applied project carried out at the concentration year practicum setting, in conjunction with SOWK 665/675: Advanced Practicum and Seminar I & II and culminating in a poster presentation conducted in conjunction with SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation. Students work with their academic advisor, field supervisor, SOWK 665/675 practicum faculty, and SOWK 669 research faculty to develop and implement a feasible Capstone Project in the practicum setting. Refer to the *Capstone Project Protocol: Student and Faculty Responsibilities* for an overview of student and faculty responsibilities.

The Capstone Project is designed to meet the learning needs and interests of the students, as well as make a contribution to the practicum agency. The Capstone Project may take an advanced direct practice focus or an advanced indirect practice focus. The Capstone Project may build upon previous coursework that is applied to the practicum agency and/or may build upon a project already initiated at the practicum agency. The Capstone Project is written into each student's Learning Contract.

### **Capstone Project Options**

Possible direct practice options include but are not limited to:

- Direct practice through single-subject evaluation
- Research into a new treatment modality not currently used at the agency
- Research and analysis of the effectiveness of different treatment modalities for a target population/treatment issue
- Research on the application of a treatment modality used at the agency with a diverse population (e.g., specific racial or ethnic group, developmentally disabled, elderly, GLBT)

Possible indirect practice options include but are not limited to:

- Needs assessment/survey
- Analysis of a policy that has direct impact on the agency (agency, state, federal)
- Development of agency training materials
- Research and write/revise agency policy and procedures
- Design and implement a public education/awareness campaign
- Evaluation of program effectiveness

### *Capstone Project Requirements and Process*

It is anticipated that the nature and focus of Capstone Projects will vary from student to student. However, the process each student uses for developing the Capstone Project is the same and should include the following elements:

- A clear statement of purpose and the problem the project aims to address.
- A review of the literature to determine best practice for carrying out the project.
- An examination of the ethical issues that apply and implications for the project.
- An examination of issues associated with populations-at-risk and/or diverse groups and implications for the project.
- An examination of issues associated with rural and small communities and implications for the project.
- A detailed design or protocol for conducting the project that is reviewed and approved by the field education faculty and the student's academic advisor.
- Presentation of the findings/results.
- Conclusion and recommendations for next steps.

More detailed guidelines and instructions for creating and documenting the process used in the Capstone Project will be provided by the instructors of SOWK 665/675: Advanced Practicum and Seminar I & II.

### *Poster Presentation Requirements*

Each poster presentation should include the following elements that parallel the *Capstone Project Requirements and Process*. Appropriate use of references and citations in accordance with APA style is a requirement for the final poster product. Careful preparation of the poster presentation that clearly and succinctly outlines students' work is critical.

- A clear statement of purpose and the problem the project aims to address.
- Best practice strategies used as a result of the literature review.
- Summary of the key ethical/populations-at-risk/diversity issues and how they were addressed in the project.
- Summary of key rural and small community issues and how they were addressed in the project.
- Overview of the design or protocol for conducting the project.
- Summary of the key findings/results, including interconnections between social work practice, theory, policy and research (as applicable to the project.)
- Conclusion and recommendations for next steps.
- Benefits to the students as an advanced generalist social worker and benefits to the agency.

More detailed guidelines and instruction for preparing and delivering the poster presentation will be provided by the instructor of SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation.

### **Capstone Project Implementation Protocol**

Preparation for the Capstone Research Project begins during the fall semester of the concentration year before students enroll in SOWK 665: Advanced Practicum and Seminar I. Students work with their academic advisor to begin to explore students' interests and options. Simultaneously students are working with field education faculty to explore practicum options and secure their practicum placements. The need for a Capstone Project should be part of the exploration of placement during the interview process with potential practicum agencies.

In SOWK 665: Advanced Practicum and Seminar students will receive further instruction on incorporating the Capstone Project into the Learning Contract, obtaining approval and creating a timeline for completion. Throughout the spring semester students will simultaneously consult with their academic advisor, field instructor, and field education faculty to decide upon the Capstone Project that will be written into the practicum Learning Contract and implemented at the practicum agency.

- The academic advisor fulfills a consultative role (e.g., brainstorming, weighing options, identify resources, etc.) in order to ensure that the project is feasible and meets the Capstone Project Requirements. The academic advisor provides written approval for the

Capstone Project before the project is approved by the field instructor and field education faculty. Field education faculty will provide students with the approval form.

- The field instructor fulfills a consultative role in order to ensure that the project will benefit the field agency and is feasible. The field instructor provides written approval for the project as one component of the student's Learning Contract.
- The field education faculty fulfills a consultative role to ensure that the project is feasible and meets the Capstone Project requirements. Field education faculty provides the final approval for the Capstone Project.

During the spring semester students will also engage in Project Dialogue Groups (PDG) during practicum seminar and under the direction of SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation and other faculty as deemed necessary to help students further develop and implement their projects. In addition, the PDG provides students the opportunity to get feedback from other students and to share the process of creating and implementing their projects. Students are expected to consult with their academic advisor and or other faculty throughout the spring semester as is warranted to assist in developing and implementing the Capstone Project. A detailed timeline for completion will be drafted by each student to guide the process of developing and implementing their Capstone Project.

Students are required to document their process and progress, using the detailed timeline they have drafted, in completing the Capstone Project on D2L. Instructions on how to use D2L to fulfill the requirements of the project will be provided by field education faculty. Each student's academic advisor, field supervisor and field education faculty will have access to the information posted by the student on D2L. The actual project conducted at the practicum agency should be completed by the sixth week of the summer semester.

In SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation students will receive instructions on how to prepare and conduct a poster presentation. Students are expected to conduct their poster presentation at their practicum agency and at a forum showcasing MSW Capstone Projects. The Capstone Project presentation forum provides the opportunity for students to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession and for the MSW Program to publically acknowledge field agencies for their contribution to students' professional growth and development.

### **Evaluation of the Capstone Project**

The process for developing and implementing the project and the outcome will be evaluated by the field instructor and field education faculty to ensure that the requirements for the project have been met. Failure to satisfactorily complete the project can affect the final evaluation in SOWK 665/675: Advanced Practicum and Seminar I & II. The poster presentation will be evaluated by the SOWK 669 faculty as one of the requirements for successfully completing the concentration year research course.

### Capstone Project Protocol: Student and Faculty Responsibilities

Time Frame	Student Responsibility	Faculty/Responsibility
Early Fall semester	Initiates discussion with Academic Advisor regarding Capstone Project (CP). Meets with academic advisor as needed to explore interests and options.	<b>Academic Advisor:</b> Orients student to CP.
Fall semester	Meets with SOWK 665 faculty and completes paperwork and interviews as directed in field manual for practicum placement, including a preliminary discussion of CP.	<b>SOWK 665 faculty:</b> Begins placement process, finalize placements
Early Spring semester	Participates in Project Dialogue Groups (PDGs) as part of SOWK 665 Seminar to discuss: CP possibilities in practicum sites, incorporation of the CP into the Learning Contract, creating a timeline for completion, project design and implementation, direct practice and indirect practice projects	<b>SOWK 665 faculty:</b> Convenes Seminar, facilitates final decisions for CP, oversees the development of the Learning Contract, and provides form for approval signatures from Academic Advisor, Field Instructor, schedules Project Dialogue Groups (PDGs) in consultation with SOWK 669 faculty and other faculty as warranted.
Early Spring semester	Meets with Academic Advisor as needed to discuss: 1) purpose and problem the project aims to address and 2) design or protocol for conducting the project.	<b>Academic Advisor:</b> Consults on project as needed, to ensure that the CP is feasible and meets the CP requirements; provides written approval for the CP.
Early Spring semester	Meets with Field Instructor to discuss the Capstone Project, including the 1) purpose and problem the project aims to address and 2) design or protocol for conducting the project.	<b>Field Instructor:</b> Consults on the project to ensure that the project is feasible and beneficial to the agency. Provides written approval for the Capstone Project as one component of the Learning Contract.
Early Spring semester	Submits a timeline for completing the project and incorporates the CP into the Learning Contract.  Implements appropriate steps of CP and provides on-going updates on the status of CP using D2L	<b>SOWK 665 faculty:</b> Provides final approval for the CP, works with student to develop timeline for CP completion that coordinates with Learning Contract and practicum evaluations at 150 and 300 hours. Provides instruction on how to use D2L to document fulfillment of the requirements of the project. Reviews and provides feedback on D2L postings.

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Student Responsibility</b>	<b>Faculty/Responsibility</b>
Spring semester	Consults with Academic Advisor on implementation of the project as needed.	<b>Academic Advisor:</b> Provides feedback and guidance on implementation of the Capstone Project as requested. Reviews and provides feedback on D2L postings.
Spring semester	Consults with Field Instructor on implementation of the project as needed.	<b>Field Instructor:</b> Provides feedback and guidance on implementation of the Capstone Project as part of supervision. May review and provide feedback on D2L postings.
Summer semester	Enrolls and participates in SOWK 669 and 675.	<b>SOWK 669 faculty:</b> Convenes SOWK 669 and provides instructions on how to prepare and conduct a poster presentation.  <b>SOWK 675 faculty:</b> convene seminar and oversees final steps of CP. Schedules PDGs in consultation with SOWK 669 faculty and other faculty as warranted.
Summer semester	CP completed by Week 6, final D2L posting completed.  Creates a poster presentation that meets the requirements of the poster presentation and SOWK 669.	<b>SOWK 675 faculty:</b> reviews final D2L postings  <b>SOWK 669 faculty:</b> oversees final poster preparations
Summer semester	Conducts a poster presentation at the practicum agency.	<b>SOWK 675 faculty in consultation with Field Instructor:</b> Evaluates the process for developing and implementing the project and the outcome to ensure that the requirements for the project have been met. Provides feedback on the agency poster presentation.
Summer semester	Conducts a poster presentation at the Department's MSW forum.	<b>SOWK 669 faculty:</b> Evaluates poster presentation as one part of course grade, posts final grade.
Summer semester	Completes remainder of field practicum hours and assignments.	<b>SOWK 675 faculty:</b> Evaluates CP as one part of assessing successful complete of SOWK 665/675, posts final grade.