



**Department of Social Work
MSW Program**

Capstone Project

**Final Version
Spring, 2009**

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 under the guidance of the advisor, implemented 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 661: Advanced Social Work Practice Administration. Students work with their academic advisor, field supervisor, SOWK 665/675 field liaison, and SOWK 661 faculty to develop, implement and present a feasible Capstone Project in the practicum setting. Refer to Addendum 1 *Capstone Project Protocol* for an overview of student and faculty responsibilities.

**Note: Summer 2009 students will be working with the SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation faculty to complete this assignment.

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

Note: Capstone Projects involving the use of human subjects may require approval from the MSU, M and/or agency Institutional Review Board.

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 determination of the necessity for Institutional Review Board approval (from MSU, M IRB *and or* the agency's internal IRB). Some projects may not require IRB approval but any project those involving human subjects may. Students are expected to visit the MSU, M IRB website at <http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/> to review the criteria and discuss with their academic advisor. Students are also expected to discuss this with their agency field instructor to determine the agency expectations for IRB approval.
- 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 661: Advanced Social Work Practice Administration.

**Note: Summer 2009 students will receive presentation guidelines from the SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation faculty in order to complete this assignment.

Capstone Project Implementation Protocol

Preparation for the Capstone 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 their field liaison 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 liaison to decide upon the Capstone Project that will be written into the practicum Learning Contract and implemented at the practicum agency.

- The agency 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 approval for the project as one component of the student's Learning Contract. The field instructor will also be instrumental in determining the need for Institutional Review Board (IRB) or other such approval *from their agency* and will provide access to that process. Additionally, if it is determined that IRB approval is required by MSU, M the field instructor will provide a letter of support for the MSU, M IRB application. A template for this letter is available (see Addendum 3).
- The SOWK 665/675 field liaison fulfills a consultative role to ensure that the project is feasible, is integrated into the overall field practicum and Learning Contract, and meets the Capstone Project requirements. Field liaison provides approval for the project as one component of the student's Learning Contract. The field office will also establish and maintain a Desire 2 Learn (D2L) website for information sharing and tracking between students, academic advisors, field instructors, and field liaisons.
- The academic advisor fulfills an oversight role (e.g., brainstorming, weighing options, identify resources, final approval and ongoing oversight) in order to ensure that the project is feasible and meets the Capstone Project requirements. The academic advisor provides final written approval for the Capstone Project after the project is approved by the field instructor and field education faculty. The academic advisor will be instrumental in determining the need for IRB approval from MSU, M and will provide oversight for the preparation and submission, with the required signature, for the IRB application. While the academic advisor will be identified by the MSU, M IRB as the Principle Investigator (PI), the responsibility for planning and implementing this project is with the student. The academic advisor will also provide approval for the project design or protocol.

During the spring semester students will also engage in Project Dialogue Groups (PDG) during practicum seminar with **SOWK 661: Advanced Social Work Administration Practice faculty 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 throughout the spring semester 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 (refer to Addendum 4).

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 liaisons. Each student's academic

advisor, field instructor, and field liaison 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 661: Advanced Social Work Practice Administration** 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.

****Note:** Summer 2009 students will receive presentation guidelines from the SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation faculty in order to complete this assignment.

Evaluation of the Capstone Project

The process for developing and implementing the project and the outcome will be evaluated by the field instructor and SOWK 665/675 field liaison, in consultation with the academic advisor, to ensure that the goals 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 661, Advanced Social Work Practice Administration** faculty as one of the requirements for successfully completing the concentration year administration course.

****Note:** Summer 2009 students' poster presentation will be evaluated by the SOWK 669: Advanced Social Work Evaluation faculty in order to complete this assignment.