Master of Social Work Program
Capstone Project Description
FINAL 2014-2015

Revised 11/10/14
**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 of a capstone product and the creation and delivery of a poster presentation.

**MSW Capstone Project Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the MSW Capstone Project students will have met the following learning outcomes (see chart on page 9 for identified Advanced Practice Behaviors):

1) Design, implement and evaluate an evidence-based direct or indirect practice intervention within the context of the practice setting (EP 2.1.6 – APB 16; EP 2.1.9 – APB 22 & 23).

2) Critically analyze and understand the ethical issues associated with conducting direct or indirect practice intervention or evaluation within the context of the practice setting (EP 2.1.2 – APB 5; EP 2.1.3 – APB 8 & 9; EP 2.1.9 – APB 22 & 23).

3) Critically analyze and understand the issues associated with populations-at-risk or diverse groups as they pertain to conducting a direct or indirect practice intervention or evaluation within the context of the practice setting (EP 2.1.3 – APB 8 & 9; EP 2.1.4 – APB 10; EP 2.1.9 – APB 22 & 23).

4) Critically analyze and understand the implications of the project for social work practice, theory, research, or policy (EP 2.1.1 – APB 1, 3, & 4; EP 2.1.3 – APB 8 & 9; EP 2.1.6 – APB 16; EP 2.1.8 – APB 20).

5) Develop and present a professional-level poster presentation (EP 2.1.3 – 8 & 9).

**MSW Capstone Project Description**

The Capstone Project is an integrative applied project carried out under the supervision of the Academic Advisor through SOWK 679: MSW Capstone Project and is implemented at the concentration year practicum setting culminating in a product and poster presentation. Students work with their Academic Advisor and in consultation with agency field instructor or task supervisor, SOWK 665/675 Seminar Instructor, and MSW Field Liaison to develop, implement and present a feasible Capstone Project in the practicum setting. Refer to the Capstone Project Implementation Protocol 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 concentration year practicum Learning Contract and may account for approximately 100 hours of the 500 hour field education practicum.

Capstone Project Options

Possible direct practice options include but are not limited to:
- Direct practice evaluation through single-system research design
- 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 Roles

Each student will be working primarily with his or her Academic Advisor and agency field instructor or task supervisor, with some communication with Field Liaison and MSW Field Director in order to successfully complete the Capstone Project.

Academic Advisor

The Academic Advisor is the primary point of contact to ensure that the project is feasible and meets the Capstone Project requirements. This includes brainstorming, weighing options, identifying resources, and finally approving, providing oversight, and evaluating the Capstone Project. The Academic Advisor will be instrumental in determining the need for IRB approval from MSU, Mankato 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, Mankato IRB as the Principle Investigator (PI), the responsibility for planning and implementing this project is with the student. The Academic Advisor monitors the
implementation of the project and provides the Field Liaison and MSW Field Director with
feedback regarding successful progress and completion of the project.

Field Liaison, MSW Field Director, & Seminar Instructor
The Field Liaison and MSW Field Director fulfills a consultative role to ensure that the project is
integrated into the overall field practicum and Learning Contract. The MSW program will
establish and maintain a Desire 2 Learn (D2L) website for information sharing and tracking
between students, Academic Advisors, Field Liaisons, and MSW Field Director.

The Seminar Instructor will facilitate supportive discussions about the Capstone Projects during
practicum seminar. The discussions provide students the opportunity to get feedback from
other students and to share the process of creating and implementing their projects.

The Field Liaison and/or MSW Field Director will review the evaluation of progress from each
student’s Academic Advisor at designated times to confirm that satisfactory progress is being
made on the implementation of the Capstone Project. If satisfactory progress is not being
made, then the MSW Field Director will consult with the Academic Advisor and student
regarding completion of the remaining field practicum.

Agency Field Instructor or Task Supervisor
The agency field instructor or task supervisor fulfills a consultative role in order to ensure that
the project will benefit the field agency and is feasible. The agency field instructor or task
supervisor provides input in the development and implementation of the Capstone Project. The
agency field instructor or task supervisor provides approval for the “idea” of the project via a
letter or email to the Academic Advisor. The agency field instructor or task supervisor 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. The agency field instructor
or task supervisor will provide feedback regarding implementation of the project at the agency
as part of the evaluation of successful progress and completion of the Learning Contract.

MSW Capstone Project: Four Core Requirements

The four required components of each Capstone Project, described in this document, are:

1. Capstone Project Proposal Approval Process (may include IRB forms)
2. Evaluation of Implementation/Progress of the Capstone Project
3. Poster Presentation
4. Product from the Capstone Project

1. Capstone Project Proposal Approval Process
The Capstone Project Proposal is developed by the student under the guidance of the Academic
Advisor and in collaboration with the field instructor. A description appears later in this
document of the roles of the Academic Advisor, SOWK 665/675 Field Liaison, and the agency
field instructor or task supervisor. Students should review those descriptions carefully.
The “Idea” for a Capstone Project

The process of determining the specific Capstone Project will vary somewhat for each student. The initial step in the process is to obtain approval from the Academic Advisor and the field instructor or task supervisor for the “idea” for the project. In general, students will use the following process to select their Capstone Project idea:

1. During the practicum placement process, the student will explore possible Capstone Project options with practicum agency field instructor or task supervisor.
2. The student will meet with the Academic Advisor late in the fall semester to discuss possible Capstone Project options.
3. Once a Capstone Project idea is agreed upon by the student and Academic Advisor, the student will obtain written approval for the idea from the student’s field instructor or task supervisor. An e-mail to the student from the field supervisor, forwarded to the Academic Advisor, is sufficient written approval for the idea for a Capstone Project. *Keep in mind this approval is only for the idea, not the full proposal.*

Capstone Project Preliminary Review of the Literature

Once the Academic Advisor has approved the idea for the Capstone Project, each student will develop a preliminary review of the relevant research literature. In general, it is anticipated that each student will:

1. Discuss the nature and focus of the literature review with the student’s Academic Advisor prior to conducting the review.
2. Review the relevant research literature.
3. Write a summary of the findings.
4. Meet with Academic Advisor to discuss the findings and the drafting of the Capstone Project Proposal.

Capstone Project Proposal

Each student completes the *Capstone Project Proposal Form*, which is the cover sheet for the proposal. The required components of the Capstone Project Proposal are:

1. Student name
2. Title of the project
3. Name of the practicum agency and location
4. Agency field instructor or task supervisor
5. SOWK 665/675 Field Liaison or MSW Field Director, Academic Advisor and Capstone Instructor (if different).

6. Track Type:
   A. IRB Track Proposal
      a. If your project will utilize data from human subjects and meets certain criteria you are required to complete an IRB Proposal. Review the Guidelines of an Application for the Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects [http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/](http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/) and discuss this with your advisor.
      b. Draft an IRB Proposal for your project in accordance with the guidelines provided.
c. Write and attach a copy of the IRB Application and submit to your advisor for review to the Capstone Proposal Form.

d. With the IRB Application, attach your preliminary review of the literature to determine evidence-based best practices for carrying out the project along with a reference page.

e. After your academic advisor has reviewed your entire proposal you will meet to discuss the level of review, and development of any additional required IRB Application attachments.

f. Do not submit the Application to the IRB directly. Your advisor MUST be designated as the Principle Investigator (PI) on the IRB Application; this will be then submitted electronically to the IRB using IRBNet.org.

B. Non-IRB Track Proposal

a. Statement of the Problem/Need. Write a paragraph or two describing the problem or need that this Capstone Project proposes to address. Include references to any literature that you have reviewed that document the problem/need.

b. Statement of Purpose. Write a paragraph or two describing the purpose and goals of this Capstone Project. As applicable to your project, delineate the hypothesis being tested or the research questions you will answer.

c. Preliminary Literature Review. Include your preliminary review of the literature that you have conducted to develop this proposal.

d. Proposed Methodology. Provide a description of the methodology that you will be using to achieve the goals of your Capstone Project. Attach a one-page summary of the review of the literature to determine evidence-based best practices for carrying out the project with your references. In this section:

• Describe what you are going to do.
• Describe how you are going to collect your data. If applicable, attach existing data collection instruments.
• Describe who will be participants in your project and how you will solicit involvement from participants.
• Describe ethical implications for conducting the project.
• Describe how you are going to analyze/organize the data/information collected.

Additional Common Components of Proposal: ALL students submit items 7 – 11.

7. Statement of the Issues Associated with Populations-at-Risk and/or Diverse Groups

A paragraph that describes the issues associated with populations-at-risk and/or diverse groups and the implications of these issues for conducting your project. Think about and identify the specific populations-at-risk and/or diverse groups. Examine how select populations are differentially impacted by the problem. Examine how select populations may benefit from project outcomes.
8. **Statement of the Issues Associated with Rural and Small Communities**
   A paragraph that describes the issues associated with rural and small communities and the implications of these issues for conducting the project. Examine how rural and small communities are differentially impacted by the problem. Examine how an understanding of rural and small communities and people impacts the implementation of your project.

9. **Anticipated Project Outcomes**
   Write a paragraph describing the final product that will be produced as a result of your project and the impact you anticipate your project will have on your agency, including clients, staff, service delivery, administration) and if applicable other systems outside of the agency. Describe planned dissemination of this product (e.g. presentation, distribution, etc.).

10. **Timeline**
    Attach a detailed timeline for completing your project (see template provided). This should include the steps involved in further design, implementation, organization and analysis of data, preliminary presentation of findings/outcome to agency personnel, writing of project reports (as applicable), creation of your poster and executive summary, delivery of your poster presentation to agency personnel and at the MSW Research Showcase.

11. **References**
    Attach a copy of your references from the preliminary literature review and other parts of the proposal. All sources used in the development of this proposal must be properly cited following the Publication Manual of APA (6th Edition) style guidelines. You may also list sources that you reviewed or intend to use but did not directly cite in your proposal.

**Capstone Project Approval**
Students submit the completed Capstone Project Proposal and related documents to the Academic Advisor for review, feedback, approval, and final signature. More than one version of the proposal may need to be submitted before approval is granted. The student is responsible for obtaining the signature of the field instructor/task supervisor after the Academic Advisor has approved the completed proposal. Students may not begin working on the Capstone Project until the Academic Advisor has signed the Capstone Project Proposal, and if needed, IRB approval has been granted. The Academic Advisor will keep the original signed Capstone Project Proposal. The student should provide both the agency field instructor/task supervisor and MSW Field Director with a copy of the approved and signed proposal.
2. Evaluation of Capstone Project Implementation, Progress, and Completion

Students are required to complete the Capstone Project in the concentration year practicum agency and the project will be incorporated into the Learning Contract. In order to successfully pass the concentration practicum, students must satisfactorily complete the Capstone Project. Therefore, students are required to obtain written evaluation from Academic Advisor of progress/performance on Capstone Project as part of the ongoing evaluation of their Learning Plan (at the 150, 300, & 500 hour marks), which will be shared with their Field Instructor/task supervisor and the MSW Field Director.

While in field practicum, the student will also be enrolled in SOWK 679 MSW Capstone Project (one credit each during the Spring and Summer Semesters of the concentration year). The Academic Advisor will work with the student to ensure that they are making adequate progress towards completion of the Capstone Project. Students are required to ensure that their Academic Advisor and Field Instructor/Task Supervisor are kept informed of their progress on the Capstone Project, including any challenges or unanticipated problems. Progress may be documented using email, posting messages on the Capstone Project D2L webpage, face-to-face meetings, or other communication methods. Students should consult with their Academic Advisor and Field Instructor/Task Supervisor to determine the preferred method for communication on CP progress.

The Academic Advisor is responsible for assigning a grade for SOWK 679 upon completion of each semester. Adequate progress means the student has submitted a complete CP proposal to their Academic Advisor no later than March 2, 2015 and has a signed CP Proposal no later than April 3, 2015. Failure to meet program deadlines and make adequate progress in SOWK 679 during the Spring Semester will result in a grade of “IP” (In Progress) or “NC” (No Credit).

Receipt of a “NC” in SOWK 679 for spring term will prevent the student from progressing in the program. In the event an “NC” is earned for SOWK 679 in summer term, the student will need to register for and complete the Capstone requirement by registering for and completing an additional 1-credit of SOWK 679 with their Academic Advisor during the Fall Semester (and possibly also Spring Semester) of the subsequent academic year, until the student has met all the requirements and expectations of the Capstone Project.

Document Retention
An 8.5”x11” copy of the Capstone Project poster will be retained in the student’s file for ten (10) years post-graduation. IRB approval letters or emails, if pertinent, will also be retained for the same time period unless approval otherwise specifies.

3. Poster Presentation
Students are expected to conduct a presentation at their practicum agency and a poster presentation at the MSW Student Research Showcase. This event 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. Students will receive instructions on how to prepare and conduct a poster
presentation. During the Showcase members of the University and the community come to talk with students about their projects.

**Poster Requirements**

Each poster presentation should include the following elements that parallel the *Capstone Project Requirements*. Appropriate use of references and citations in accordance with the Publication Manual of the APA (6th Edition) style guidelines is a requirement for the poster. Careful preparation of the poster presentation that clearly and succinctly outlines students’ work is critical. The following are general guidelines for the content that should be presented in the posters; however, the nature of the specific project will ultimately determine the information presented. Consult with your Academic Advisor regarding the information that you should present for your specific project.

- Title of the project
- Title of the practicum agency, agency field instructor or task supervisor, and Academic Advisor
- A statement of the significance and purpose of the project.
- Overview of the methodology for conducting the project
- Summary of the relevant literature
- Presentation of key findings
- Discussion (which may include benefits to the agency) and recommendations for next steps.
- References

**4. Product for Agency from Capstone Project**

While the poster for the MSW Research Showcase may be a central piece of the Capstone Project, generally speaking the poster is not the sole product. Each student will produce some type of CP Product that is in fitting with the agency’s interests and needs. The actual “product” will vary depending upon the nature of the project. The student will work closely with their Academic Advisor and Agency Field Instructor/Task Supervisor in defining what the product will be and how the product will be presented to the agency. Possible products may include:

- Training manual
- Policy and procedure manual
- Policy analysis and/or policy brief
- Survey instrument
- Evaluation report
- Research report
- Staff training or formal presentation
- Or other product as negotiated with your advisor and field site

In some cases, your Advisor may request that you develop an Executive Summary to accompany the product to be delivered to the agency. Your Academic Advisor will offer you further direction about this.
## Competencies and Advanced Practice Behaviors present in the MSW Capstone Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPETENCIES AND CONCENTRATION YEAR PRACTICE BEHAVIORS</th>
<th>Location in Capstone Project process:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Policy 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 1: Demonstrate independence and accountability as an Advanced Generalist social worker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 3: Differentiate and manage boundaries and multiple roles at multiple system levels.</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 4: Model and promote life-long learning, scholarship, community involvement, and commitment to the social work profession.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, &amp; 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>EP 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 5: Identify and analyze ethical issues related to the selection and implementation of interventions particularly in rural and small community settings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Policy 2.1.3 - Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 8: Communicate professional judgments to client systems, public audiences, professional colleagues, and policy makers through multiple forms of media.</td>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 9: Analyze and integrate disparate information, theories, and empirical research knowledge in selecting and using intervention strategies.</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 10: Demonstrate culturally responsive social work practice appropriate to the practice context.</td>
<td>1 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>2.1.6: Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 16: Use the evidence-based practice framework with client systems.</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>EP 2.1.8 Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services</td>
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<td>APB 20: Demonstrate leadership in critiquing policy and advocating for policy change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EP 2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 22: Engage in multidisciplinary collaborative practice.</td>
<td>1, 2, &amp; 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB 23: Critically analyze, respond to, and shape the rural and small community practice context</td>
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Initially reviewed, October 2, 2013; Final adoption, October 9, 2013

### Four core Capstone Project Requirements:

1. Capstone Approval Process and Proposal
2. Implementation of Capstone Project
3. Capstone Project Poster
4. Product from the Capstone Project

Note: The eleven advanced practice behaviors identified here are present in all Capstone Projects, as evidenced by the connection to the Four Core Requirements of the Capstone Project. Other advanced practice behaviors will likely be reinforced, depending on the nature of the student’s project.