Overview

Students will select a business or non-profit organization to research and prepare a Capstone Research Paper to demonstrate an ability to integrate and synthesize the knowledge learned in the BAS program. Specifically, the paper will afford students the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in recognizing the types of problems encountered in the field of management, conducting suitable research, and identifying appropriate solutions in a “real world” setting.

This research paper is an integral element of the capstone learning experience and it represents a major component of the final course grade. Each chapter will be submitted through SAFE ASSIGN.COM as it is completed (per due dates shown in the class calendar). Sections outlining each chapter in this document include checklists to ensure the student thoroughly addresses all requirements. Each section also includes grading methodology tables (rubrics) for each chapter. Grading for the final (assembled) paper will be supported by the rubric entitled Assessing and Grading the Capstone Research Paper (found on page 25 of this document). The following sections provide the purpose, description and requirements for preparing the paper.

Research Paper and Learning Outcomes

In addition to fulfilling requirements for the Capstone course, the research paper provides a source of Program Learning Outcome assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of the PBSC BAS program. The table below summarizes the Program Learning Outcomes students will demonstrate in preparing the paper. The specific methodology for extracting and assessing the program learning outcome data is offered in separate documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome Number</th>
<th>Learning Outcome Description Business Concentration</th>
<th>Primary Chapter References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LO-1</td>
<td><strong>Analyze</strong> the strategies leaders use to motivate and evaluate individuals and teams</td>
<td>Chapters 3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO-2</td>
<td><strong>Comprehend</strong> and apply ethical practices in professional activities</td>
<td>Chapters 3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO-3</td>
<td><strong>Comprehend</strong> and apply the framework underlying the principles of finance, budgeting and accounting</td>
<td>Chapters 2 &amp; 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>LO-4</td>
<td><strong>Apply</strong> management theories and practices in program and resource management</td>
<td>Chapters 4 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO-5</td>
<td><strong>Analyze</strong> strategies &amp; frameworks used by leaders to initiate change in organizations</td>
<td>Chapters 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO-6</td>
<td><strong>Apply</strong> information management practices to the business/organization environment and adapt to future technology changes</td>
<td>Chapters 2 &amp; 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>LO-7</td>
<td><strong>Demonstrate</strong> written and oral presentation skills expected of a Supervision and Management degree graduate</td>
<td>Chapter 1 plus Overall Paper &amp; Final Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO-8-B1 (Bus-Adm. Concentration)</td>
<td><strong>Integrate</strong> the knowledge acquired in the Supervision &amp; Management program to analyze a business organization to identify its strengths and weaknesses and develop an improvement plan</td>
<td>Chapters 4 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apply skills acquired in management, business law, accounting, finance, economics, and management information systems to different management environments

Chapters 2 & 4

The above learning outcomes are reiterated at various points in the remainder of this document to highlight the areas in the five chapters where students should demonstrate the concepts.

Components of the Capstone Research Paper: Outline

Chapter 1: Research Proposal and Introduction
Chapter 2: Literature Search
Chapter 3: Organizational Operations and Strategies
Chapter 4: SWOT Analysis
Chapter 5: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusion

References
Final Presentation

Formatting

Prepare the paper in APA-style, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font. Select “bold” font for headings and sub-headings and use as many as necessary. Business reports need to be direct and to the point. Sentences should be written in the active voice. Active voice in grammar is defined as writing a sentence where the subject of the sentence performs the action of the verb. Additionally, one of the features of academic writing is a general absence of the first person pronouns. Students should avoid the use of first person pronouns such as "I, my, me, we, etc..."

An APA-formatted title page, reference pages, and an abstract are required. Each chapter will begin on a separate page. All elements of the paper must conform to style requirements of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (commonly called the APA style manual, 6th edition). The Pocket Style Manual APA 6th edition should be used as a reference in preparing this research paper.

Chapter 1: Research Proposal and Introduction

Overview: This chapter summarizes the reason for writing the paper and formulates the research question and hypothesis you will use as a basis for research in the remainder of the paper. The chapter also explains why the project is important and describes how you will proceed with the research. As you begin writing your paper, you should have an understanding of purpose, audience, tone, context, and genre.

- The audience during your final presentation will consist of the course instructors, students, faculty, and college officials. However, you may take the approach that the audience includes the organization’s CEO and/or Board of Directors.
- The tone of the paper offers evidence of professional and academic accomplishments while expressing the attitude that the audience is interested in further reviewing and implementing the recommendations.
- Your context is an academic setting but also assume you are preparing the paper at the request of a CEO or Board of Directors within a “business” context.
- Finally, the genre is reflective of a scholarly work presented in an academic setting but write your paper so that a business executive will take action on your recommendations.
Details: While research proposals are not typically included as part of a research paper, in this course you will prepare a formal proposal as Chapter 1. This type of proposal explains why you are researching the subject, how you plan to conduct the research, and why the research is important. By offering a brief preview of the information incorporated in subsequent chapters, it also provides an opportunity to demonstrate an ability to conduct a comprehensive examination of the subject. You may think of this chapter as a request for the authority to proceed with the research while attempting to convince the instructor (or Chief Executive Officer or Board of Directors) that the project is relevant, informative, and worthy of further academic (or business) analysis. Chapter 1 includes the following information:

Section I: Introduction to the Organization
Introduce your agency in this section by highlighting the items (using subheadings) listed below. Be brief here since you will review the organization’s operations and strategies in more detail in Chapter 3. Provide subheadings and discuss the general topics listed below:

- Corporate name, founding date, founding leaders
- Briefly identify essential events and critical incidents in the company’s history
- Briefly discuss historical (initial) products; current products/services and the evolution to new products
- Briefly describe entry into new business lines, if any
- Briefly mention industry competitors

Section II: Statement of the Problem
In this section, briefly introduce and describe possible problems, issues, concerns, weaknesses, or threats based on the background information presented in Section I. This is the basis for the SWOT analysis in Chapter 4.

Based on your preliminary review of the company’s background and current status, state exactly nature of the problem the company is facing. A problem statement is a description of a difficulty, problem, or issue that needs to be solved or at least researched to see whether a solution can be found. It can also be described as either a gap between the real and the desired or a contradiction between principle and practice.

What is the goal of a statement of problem?
The ultimate goal of a problem statement is to transform a generalized problem (something that bothers you; a perceived lack) into a targeted, well-defined problem that can be resolved through focused research and careful decision-making.

Writing a problem statement should help you clearly identify the purpose of the project you will propose. Often, the problem statement will also serve as the basis for the introductory section of your final proposal, directing your reader’s attention quickly to the issues that your proposed project will address and providing the reader with a concise statement of the proposed project itself. A problem statement need not be long and windy. One-half of a page is more than enough for a good statement of problem.

Example of a Problem Statement
According to the XY university mission statement, the university seeks to provide students with a safe, healthy learning environment. Dormitories are one important aspect of that learning
environment, since 55% of XY students live in campus dorms and most of these students spend a significant amount of time working in their dorm rooms.

However, students living in dorms A B C, and D currently do not have air conditioning units, and during the hot seasons, it is common for room temperatures to exceed 80 degrees F. Many students report that they are unable to do homework in their dorm rooms. Others report problems sleeping because of the humidity and temperature. The rooms are not only unhealthy, but they inhibit student productivity and academic achievement.

In response to this problem, our study proposes to investigate several options for making the dorms more hospitable. We plan to carry out an all-inclusive participatory investigation into options for purchasing air conditioners (university-funded; student-subsidized) and different types of air conditioning systems. We will also consider less expensive ways to mitigate some or all of the problems noted above (such as creating climate-controlled dorm lounges and equipping them with better study areas and computing space).

Section III: Research Question
From the problem statement, develop and present a research question you plan to answer. Note that in the next step of this section, you will build upon this question to develop a hypothesis.

An example of a research question might be, “Given today’s competitive environment, is the XYZ Company capable of successfully overcoming internal planning and leadership weaknesses?”

Section IV: Hypothesis
The next step is developing a hypothesis. This is a prediction of what you expect to determine about the subject when all research concludes. The Hypothesis is based on your research question and consists of one or two sentences. In order to develop your hypothesis, simply convert your research question into a statement of what you expect your research will reveal.

An example hypothesis based on the research question mentioned in the first step could be, “The XYZ Company is experiencing various business difficulties that might be traced to a weakness in strategic planning functions.”

Your hypothesis (addressing a problem, issue, concern weakness, or threat) will help you focus on the type of research literature to review in Chapter 2. Make sure you know how to measure and prove/disprove your opinion in business terms such as profit, growth, customer satisfaction, market share, etc.

Section V: Research Significance
Prepare a statement of significance; that is, explain to the instructor (CEO or Board) why this research project is important or worthwhile. For example, you might refer to the fact that the research is important because it will expose problems that must be solved to improve profitability or survivability.

Section VI: Purpose
Briefly mention your purpose in conducting the research. The purpose is to complete thorough and convincing research with a thoughtful analysis that could assist an organization in addressing its weaknesses, reinforcing its strengths, meeting its threats, and/or taking advantage of its opportunities. You may write the paper as if attempting to persuade your organization’s Chief Executive Officer to take some action or to inform the Board of Directors of favorable or unfavorable findings.
Section: VII: Data Collection/Research Methods
Describe the data collection methods you will use to retrieve data. This should include reviewing journal articles, reading other pertinent literature, and analyzing online (or onsite) corporate records, government websites, and other resources. Data collection could also include onsite interviews and surveys.

Describe the research method for completing this project. Generally, the research method employed by most students will be qualitative research. Qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a specific organization or event. If you have questions concerning the appropriate research method, consult with your professor.

Section VIII: Chapter Summary. Briefly summarize chapter 1.

Chapter 1 Checklist
The following Checklist will help you identify any problems in your chapter prior to submitting. If you complete this checklist (assuming you have answered “Yes” to each item) and you still need personal feedback, contact your professor for further instructions.