About This Guidebook…

Dear Graduate Student,

Your MBA program will culminate with the completion of the Capstone Experience course (CAPS799), which is taken during your last seven-week session. The course is designed to provide an opportunity for you to apply and integrate the knowledge and skills that were gained during the entire MBA program. Therefore, the Capstone topic must be related to business and encompass material that was covered in the MBA curriculum, and specifically your concentration.

The purpose of this guidebook is to explain details of the CAPS799 research project. A project that provides you the opportunity to merge your learning with real world experience. An understanding of the research project is very important because some preliminary work is to be completed while enrolled in other MBA courses. An official Intent form and proposal must be received and approved at least six weeks before enrolling in the course. The purpose of the Intent form is to describe the nature of your research project.

We welcome any comments that would be helpful for the update of this guidebook. If we have not answered all your questions, The Sneden MBA faculty are eager to assist you.
Capstone Project Details

Research Methods

The project is to involve an investigation of a current issue, trend, problem, or opportunity for a department, company, or industry. It will entail extensive research of published sources (secondary information) and may include gathering primary data as well. Primary data could be gathered through focus groups, in-depth interviews, or a telephone or mail survey, however, this may present two major challenges. First, the student must become thoroughly knowledgeable in the use of the method through independent study. Second, desired survey respondents may not be available. Design of a primary research study must be approved by the faculty member before class begins. This includes sample selection, questionnaire design, and methods of analysis.

Certain projects may require students to assess the marketing or business strategies of real-world organizations. Because companies (including Davenport University) generally hold such strategic information confidential, students should be challenged to use secondary research and analytical reasoning to draw conclusions about strategic direction. Only public information will be readily available to students, and they should learn to derive meaning from that information.

If your proposed project will contain content from a paper that was written for another class, it must involve extensive additional research or it will be considered plagiarism. Plagiarism is grounds for dismissal from the University.

Research Approval

Davenport University’s Institutional Review Board is a committee mandated by Federal laws to protect the rights and welfare of the human subjects participating in research activities. Compliance is monitored by the Office of Human Research Protection of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. DU’s IRB must review and approve all proposed academic research at DU or by DU faculty, staff or students that involve certain criteria to ensure that the research meets these governmental standards for the safety and protection of any human subjects involved in the research.

NOTE: If your research involves surveys, questionnaires, focus-groups, or other methods involving people, you will need to have your study approved by the Davenport University Institutional Review Board. Review materials on the DU IRB website.

Examples of projects may be available for review at your local Davenport library.

Written Report

Below is a brief outline of the report. APA style, 6th edition, is to be used.

1. Title Page
2. Abstract or Executive Summary
3. Body of the Paper
   • Introduction
   • Literature Review
   • (If primary research is conducted)
     Method Used to Gather Information
     Results
   • Conclusions or Recommendations

4. References

5. Appendices
   • Copy of presentation software presentation slides (preferably 6 slides per page)

**Oral Presentation**

Students deliver an oral presentation of their findings during the final session of the course using presentation software slides. A copy of the presentation (preferably 6 slides per page) are to be included in the appendices of the written report.

**Evaluation of the Project**

The written report and oral presentation are evaluated based on the attributes below. Students should use this as a checklist for self-evaluation.

**Assessment of Written Assignments**

**A Paper (Exemplary):**

1. Complies fully with the assignment. Information clearly and effectively supports a central purpose or thesis and displays a thoughtful, in-depth analysis of a sufficiently limited topic. The reader gains insights.

2. Is directed towards and meets the needs of a defined audience (is persuasive or argumentative).

3. Begins, flows, and ends effectively. The introduction, body and conclusion of the paper are sound.

4. Provides compelling supporting arguments, evidence, examples and details. The use of supporting detail is embedded in a context of discussion.

5. Is well-organized and unified with ideas and sentences that relate to the main topic. The ideas are arranged logically to support the thesis.

6. Uses appropriate, direct language: the writing is compelling; the sentences are well-phrased and varied in length and structure. Paragraphs are well-structured, use of headings is excellent, and the paper shows strong organization.
7. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text citations, works cited pages, etc.).

8. Is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format.

9. Maintains a level of excellence throughout, and shows originality and creativity in realizing 1-6.

**B Paper (Proficient):**

1. Complies in a competent manner with the assignment. Information provides firm support for a central purpose or thesis, and displays evidence of a basic analysis of a sufficiently limited topic. The paper demonstrates overall competency. It shows some originality, creativity, and/or genuine engagement with issues at hand.

2. Is directed towards and meets the needs of a defined audience (is persuasive, argumentative or informational).

3. Begins, flows, and ends effectively. The introduction, body and conclusion of the paper are adequate.

4. Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples and details. The use of supporting detail is embedded in a context of discussion.

5. Is well-organized and unified with sentences that relate to the main topic. The ideas are arranged logically to support the thesis. Paragraphs are well-structured, use of headings is good, and the paper shows general organization and flow.

6. Is comprised of well-phrased sentences which are varied in length and structure. There are occasional violations in the writing, but they don’t present a major distraction or obscure the meaning.

7. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text citations, works cited pages, etc.).

8. Contains minimal errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format.

**C Paper (Marginal):**

1. Complies adequately with the assignment. Information supports the thesis at times. Analysis is basic or general. The purpose is not always clear. The paper completes (rather than engages in) the assignment.

2. Presents an unclear (either persuasive or argumentative) rhetorical position.

3. Has partial or inadequate introduction and conclusion.

4. Does not provide adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples and/or details.

5. Is not arranged logically. Ideas fail to make sense and are not expressed clearly. The reader can figure out what the writer probably intends, but may not be motivated to do so.
6. Contains some awkwardly constructed sentences which present an occasional
distraction for the reader. Paragraphs are unstructured, headings are missing, and
general organization and flow is lacking.

7. Incorrectly or partially acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text
citations, works cited pages, etc.). Although occasional references are provided, the
writer relies on unsubstantiated statements. The reader is confused about the source of
ideas.

8. Contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format,
which is distracting to the reader.

F Paper (Unacceptable):

1. Does not adequately comply with the assignment. The paper does not successfully
identify the thesis. Analysis is vague or not evident.

2. Has no rhetorical position.

3. Has an inadequate introduction and conclusion.

4. Does not provide adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples and/or details.
Paragraphs may “string together” quotations without a context of discussion.

5. Is not arranged logically. Frequently, ideas fail to make sense and are not expressed
clearly. The reader cannot identify a line of reasoning.

6. Contains frequent errors in sentence structure, which present a major distraction to the
reader. Paragraphs are unstructured, headings are missing, and the paper lacks
general organization and flow.

7. Incorrectly or partially acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text
citations, works cited pages, etc.). Although occasional references are provided, the
writer relies on unsubstantiated statements. The reader is confused about the source of
ideas.

8. Contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format,
which obscure the meaning of the passage. The reader is confused and stops reading.
### Assessment of CAPS799 Verbal Presentation

**Student Name** ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>79% - 70%</strong></td>
<td>Information presented not always clear or succinct. Concepts not described fully or communicated effectively. Did not hold audience attention. Weak preparation. Lacked ability to persuade audience. Weak organization and flow. Many spelling or grammatical errors. Sources and references not always used or cited properly in presentation. Did not meet time requirements for presentation. Did not respond effectively to audience questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>69% - 60%</strong></td>
<td>Information presented not clear or succinct. Concepts not described or communicated effectively. Did not hold audience attention. Weak preparation. Lacked ability to persuade audience. Weak organization and flow. Unacceptable number of spelling or grammatical errors. Sources and references not cited properly or used at all in presentation. Did not meet time requirements for presentation. Did not respond adequately to audience questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

________________________________________

**Grade:** ________
Final Grade

The lowest passing grade in this course is “B.” A grade of “C” or better is required on the final paper in order to earn a passing grade in this course. All course requirements must be submitted on or before the last day of the session. An Incomplete (“I”) grade is only submitted in extreme circumstances. Please refer to the Graduate Catalog for the policy on Incomplete grade. Students who do not pass the course may repeat it once with a different topic.
Getting Started

Below is the process to get started with the course:

Step 1: Schedule for the class
Students may schedule for the course at any time, however, they are wait-listed until their proposal is approved. It is the student’s responsibility to secure approval of the proposal from the professor. Contact your advisor or the appropriate staff member below to find out who will be facilitating the class in which you are enrolled.

Step 2: Submit and secure approval of the Intent Form and project proposal
Early during the session preceding the one in which students intend to begin the course, they must complete the Intent Form (attached) and a proposal that describes the project. The proposal must include a description of the project, a statement of the research question, methodology (secondary and primary), stated application process for IRB, personal interest, knowledge and skills required, and potential benefits from the project. It is essential that students receive approval by the Capstone faculty member six weeks prior to the beginning of the course so that there is time to finish the project while enrolled. See your faculty contact listed at the bottom of this page for details.

Step 3: Gather and study information for the project
As soon as the Intent Form and proposal are approved, begin gathering published information for the project. This would include securing books and articles about your topic, reading them, and noting relevant information. If the project involves focus groups, interviews, or a survey, do not begin this phase until you secure approval of the research design from the professor.
Contact Information

The Capstone Intent Form and proposal are to be submitted to the professor who will be facilitating the course. Attached is the form. Submit the completed form and proposal to the appropriate Davenport faculty member below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
<td>Jim Gort</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jim.gort@davenport.edu">jim.gort@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>Todd Terry</td>
<td><a href="mailto:todd.terry@davenport.edu">todd.terry@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint</td>
<td>James Young</td>
<td><a href="mailto:james.young@davenport.edu">james.young@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo</td>
<td>Todd Terry</td>
<td><a href="mailto:todd.terry@davenport.edu">todd.terry@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing</td>
<td>Lesley Gale</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lesley.gale@davenport.edu">lesley.gale@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livonia</td>
<td>Lesley Gale</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lesley.gale@davenport.edu">lesley.gale@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midland</td>
<td>James Young</td>
<td><a href="mailto:james.young@davenport.edu">james.young@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Jennifer Byron</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jennifer.byron@davenport.edu">jennifer.byron@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saginaw</td>
<td>James Young</td>
<td><a href="mailto:james.young@davenport.edu">james.young@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traverse City</td>
<td>Lesley Gale</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lesley.gale@davenport.edu">lesley.gale@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>Lesley Gale</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lesley.gale@davenport.edu">lesley.gale@davenport.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CAPS 799
CAPSTONE RESEARCH PROJECT

## INTENT FORM

### SNEDEA MBA PROGRAM

Students are expected to describe in writing their Capstone research project. Please complete the form below and provide a proposal which describes your project. A sample proposal follows. All students must secure approval from the professor who will facilitate the Capstone course at least six weeks before the course begins.

| Student Name: ______________________________ | Student I.D.# ______________________________ |
| Address: ___________________________________ | City __________________ State __ Zip ______ |
| Phone Numbers: (Home) ____________________ (Work) _____________ (Cell) ____________________ |
| Fax # _________________________________ E-Mail ______________________________ |
| Campus location _________________________ Student Advisor ______________________________ |

### MBA Concentration:

- [ ] Accounting
- [ ] Finance
- [ ] Health Care Management
- [ ] Human Resources Management
- [ ] Strategic Management
- [ ] Professional Accountancy (BBA/MBA)
- [ ] Marketing
- [ ] Strategic Human Resources Management (BBA/MBA)
- [ ] Honors Professional Accountancy (BBA/MBA)

### Expected session of your Capstone class enrollment:

Year ______ Session ______ Online or in-seat section __________________________

### Office use only

- [ ] The above student’s Capstone Intent was reviewed and **approved**.
  MBA Representative Signature _______________________________ Date __________

- [ ] The above student’s Capstone Intent was reviewed and must be revised. The student should see attached comments.
  MBA Representative Signature _______________________________ Date __________
I have read the Capstone Experience Guidebook which describes the nature of the project.

Please attach your proposal to the Intent Form that describes the information below. Include your name, professor’s name, and date on the attachment. Your proposal should be five-seven pages and written in APA format.

1. What is a proposed title of your project? Describe the project you have in mind. What question(s) will be answered by your research? (List and state them as questions. For example, “How can a business measure the impact of the on employee performance?"
2. Why are you interested in pursuing this project? How will it benefit you?
3. How will the project benefit the field, your company, and/or another firm?
4. How will you gather information? Does it involve only extensive research from published sources? Does is also involve collecting primary data through focus groups, in-depth interviews, and/or a survey? If so, which research method will be used? How many people will be surveyed? Why will this method accomplish the research objectives?
5. What skills, knowledge, or classes are important for you to master in order to complete this project?
6. Does the project involve content in a paper that was written for another class? If so, submit a copy of the paper with this form.

I am hereby submitting this Intent Form and proposal for approval. I understand that the Graduate faculty member assigned to evaluate it has the right to reject it and request a re-write and resubmission. I further understand that my project is to be original and that plagiarism is grounds for possible dismissal from the MBA program.

Student Electronic Signature: _______________________________ Date: ____________________
FAQs About the Capstone Experience Course

Q: What is the Capstone Experience?
A: The culminating experience in the MBA Program at Davenport University is the Capstone Experience course. It involves completing a research project. The Capstone course is taken during your final session at DU. Planning for it takes place well before the student’s last session.

Q: What is the purpose of the Capstone Experience?
A: The purpose of this course is to integrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained from several courses in the MBA program.

Q: Can I choose any topic for my project?
A: The Capstone project topic must be related to business and encompass material that was covered in the MBA curriculum.

Q: Who should I contact for more information about the course?
A: Your advisor can provide basic information. Questions regarding the academic content of the course should be directed to staff listed in this guidebook.

Q: Can I take the Capstone course prior to finishing the rest of my course requirements?
A: The Capstone Experience can be taken only as the last course in the graduate program. Although one course may be taken concurrently with the Capstone, such action is not recommended. A grade of “B” or better in the class is required for graduation. The Capstone Experience can be repeated only once.

Q: Is it too early to begin to discuss my Capstone project ideas?
A: It is never too early to discuss the Capstone. The sooner you begin to formulate ideas, the better prepared you will be before enrolling in the course. The required paperwork can be submitted in the semester prior to enrolling in the capstone session.
Q: When does my Capstone project become “official?”

A: After you complete a Capstone Intent Form (attached) proposal which describes your project, secured approval from the faculty member who will facilitate the course, submit results of your Peregrine exam, and scheduled for the class with your advisor, you may begin preliminary work that involves published sources. The project must be approved at least six weeks before the session begins. The Intent Form is not a contract, so if you wish to change your project, you may do so with another Intent Form and proposal.

Q: Are there assignments that will be considered in grading besides the project?

A: Yes. These will be explained in your professor’s syllabus.