

Verrazzano Capstone Expectations and Guidelines

A capstone is a culminating project that highlights how you have developed as a critical thinker, a problem solver, and a creative person. It demonstrates your capacity to think and create both broadly and deeply about a topic; you may synthesize information/ideas/images from what seem disparate sources to support a point of view, expose a weakness in an argument or view, or highlight novel avenues of inquiry. It is also uniquely yours.

Expectations of faculty mentors

You will need to identify a faculty mentor to review and approve your capstone proposal and the capstone itself. Faculty mentors must be full-time, tenure-track faculty. Adjunct faculty with an established, continuing relationship with the College of Staten Island and demonstrated expertise in the area explored in the capstone can serve as mentors with the approval of the Verrazzano Honors Director. Mentors must commit to being available for the duration of the work. Faculty scheduled to take sabbatical leave should only agree to mentor if they can make themselves available to fulfill their responsibilities as mentor.

Mentors have three main responsibilities:

- (1) Help you narrow and focus your topic for the capstone and approve your capstone proposal.
- (2) Point you to resources to read and explore as you develop your work.
- (3) Read and comment on multiple drafts of the proposal and capstone (including the poster/demo/performance/exhibition for the conference) until they approve and sign off on those documents as being complete.

Below we outline three broad categories of capstone (but recognize that there could be more): **(1) Research Paper, (2) Internship/Experiential Learning, and (3) Performance/Creative Arts**. There is a great deal of latitude for the kind of work you do. Please note, however, you are not permitted to use an existing class project, community service experience, or other already required activity to complete your capstone, but your capstone can certainly derive from one of these. The capstone must be *in addition* to major, degree, and program requirements, and must be supervised by a full-time faculty member. The only exception is for engineering students who may use their senior project for their capstone. Faculty mentors may also work with you and Verrazzano to make modifications to these guidelines.

(1) Research Paper Capstone Expectations

A research or term paper is an in-depth, extended investigation of a topic either through scientific experimentation or observational study; the summary of current state of knowledge about an area; or the construction of arguments about a thesis. It is not just your thoughts and feelings about a topic, but one that is supported by peer-reviewed literature and, in a more limited way, secondary sources.

A research paper should be modeled after articles in peer-reviewed journals in the relevant discipline. It should include an introduction, in which you identify a topic and justify why it is interesting. You should then effectively describe the methods (if applicable), review the topics you will cover, or describe the preparation required to complete the project. You must construct a coherent argument in the main body of work. Where the work is data-driven, you must provide results (with relevant graphs, tables, or figures) and discussion; the results section cannot consist solely of graphs,

tables or figures, but must include a narrative. You should clearly articulate conclusions that can be drawn from work. There should be a separate section for the literature cited, where all references must be properly formatted according to the conventions or style manual of your discipline.

Capstone specifications:

As a general rule of thumb, your capstone must be at least 12 double-spaced typed pages with standard margins, and fonts size no larger than 12. Total page count excludes the literature cited section, or any title page you choose to provide. You must include at least 12 relevant scholarly, peer-reviewed references and cite them according to the style guide appropriate to the discipline. Your mentor may determine that you may submit a shorter paper in keeping with the conventions of the field. Please communicate that with Cheryl.

(2) Performance/Creative Arts Capstone Expectations

Artists learn their craft by studying great masters of the genre, and an educated audience will detect the master's influence in new compositions. Context positions a composition within a "school" or movement. Background should be specific to the individual's composition and should explore its particular influences. It is important to note that no art happens in a vacuum and that an artist's perspective and message is heavily influenced by the time and place from which s/he came, thus making it important to position a piece or style in its original time and place. If one chooses to alter the artist's or the style's original time and place, it must be done consciously and with a stated objective. Additionally, it is also necessary to take what one has learned and filter it through one's own personal lens, thereby creating a unique interpretation. One accomplishes this through extensive practice and experimentation.

A strong performing/creative arts project will demonstrate originality or creative interpretation within a genre, and excellence or competence within artistic form. It will culminate in a public performance or display of your work.

Capstone specifications:

The written component of a performing/creative arts capstone must

- (1) document your creative process. You will keep a journal, blog, portfolio, etc. in which you discuss: what were your inspirations, what research you performed and how, what techniques you used, what were the stumbling blocks during the rehearsal/draft/sketching stages, if the process was collaborative how well you collaborated. There must be at least three entries per week.
- (2) be grounded in academic study. You must submit an annotated bibliography of at least 12 citations that provides context and background information for your project.

(3) Internship/Experiential Learning Capstone Expectations

You are permitted to conduct an on- or off-campus internship, participate in service learning, or develop some other pre-approved, substantive experience and make that the centerpiece of your capstone project. These do not have to be directly related to the content area of your major, but it must be substantive and related to learning about how an industry/office/field operates—your capstone should not reflect an experience spent filing, managing correspondence, or similar kinds of work, though that may comprise some small percentage of the effort.

Examples of projects:

- Work with a non-profit organization to learn how they fund-raise, manage money, define their mission, and make their mission work. You can concentrate on one aspect of the business, but you should be able to speak more broadly about their work in general.
- Assist with on-going research project that requires extensive data collection, literature review, or analysis. You will focus on your role in the project, but will need to, in your final report, be able to write about the objectives and results derived from the entire project. This may be an option if you are involved in research but are unable to conduct their own independent project, and do not have any results of your own to present.
- Develop a campus or community event such that involves long-term planning, implementation, and assessment.
- Conduct outreach with a K-12 school on incorporating current content into the classroom/teaching students about a discipline/involving them in community activities.

Capstone specifications:

A minimum of 85 hours (on-site) is required.

There are two parts to your capstone.

The first part must be at least 6 double-spaced typed pages with standard margins, and fonts size no larger than 12. For other than personal information, the source should be cited.

Total page count excludes literature cited and any title page you choose to provide.

The paper must have obvious structure (i.e., headers) and should include the following:

- A description of the institution/organization where the fieldwork took place, its mission and goals, the specific projects/initiatives you worked on, and your roles and responsibilities.
- A summary of preparatory work required, with thoughtful discussion of what you learned and how it can be applied to both the current internship/experience and to future work.
- A summary of weekly journal entries (see below) that demonstrates a thoughtful reflection on the nature of your experience, what you learned, what you would do differently, and how you will use the experience moving forward. It should also include some background information (e.g., what you learned about the topic) and how the experience may have influenced the your career choices and planning.
- A brief section that outlines the skills (i.e., communication, problem solving) required to complete this experience successfully, and which courses you have taken helped you develop those skills. Please also list classes you took for which the content was directly applicable.

The second part of your capstone is a journal of your experiences. You must complete at least weekly typed journal entries about (1) what you did for your internship, (2) what goals that work was meeting, (3) what you learned, and (4) what, if any, obstacles are/were there to the work and how you might choose to overcome them.