



**Amsterdam University College**  
***Excellence and Diversity in a Global City***  
**Capstone Guidelines 2022-2023**

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# 1. Introduction

These guidelines provide an overview of the bachelor thesis ('Capstone') process and rules at Amsterdam University College. The document addresses learning outcomes, supervisor and reader responsibilities, assessed components, and grading procedures. The guidelines are reviewed and updated periodically, based on (student) evaluations and recommendations of the Capstone Quality Assessment Committee and the Board of Studies.

## 1.1 Intended Learning Outcomes

The Capstone<sup>1</sup> is the culmination of skills, knowledge, and approaches students have acquired from their curriculum, *and therefore it must be completed during their final semester at AUC*. Students are expected to carry out research within a specified timeframe, under the supervision of a faculty member (core or partner). The research process should include the following activities: gather information and sources, formulate a thesis statement or research question, situate the research within an academic field of study, set objectives for the project, establish a methodology, and communicate the findings clearly and coherently in a polished piece of scholarly work.

*Intended learning outcomes:*

1. The student can identify a suitable topic for Capstone research, formulate and articulate objectives of a thesis, and situate the work within an academic field of study.
2. The student can analyse and evaluate the most relevant scholarly work of the chosen academic field of study and synthesise this overview within the thesis.
3. The student can locate and use a suitable methodology and can effectively and professionally engage with primary or secondary data sources to develop the objectives of the thesis.
4. The student can interpret and critically evaluate key findings and connect them to foundational concepts within an academic field of study.
5. Based on the key findings, the student can discuss limitations, articulate future lines of research, and gesture towards or identify areas of relevance beyond academia.
6. The student can write a comprehensive and coherent thesis that meets the requirements of academic writing in the academic field of study.
7. The student can effectively communicate the results of their research through writing as well as discussing and/or presenting.
8. The student works independently, shows initiative, and takes ownership of the Capstone process and results.

## 1.2 Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity/Double Major

A bachelor thesis can only be written in the field of the student's major, whether the work is focused on one discipline or incorporating several disciplines within their major. Of course, AUC strongly encourages students to approach their capstone from a multidisciplinary perspective as it would be a natural extension of the programme's curriculum. If a student chooses a capstone project that includes major-transcending interdisciplinarity, then it is expected that the student's capstone would still need to qualify as a research project within the student's major. Students that choose this path must have two co-supervisors from the two relevant majors; additionally, students who choose this option must speak with the relevant Head of Studies (from their declared major at AUC) before undertaking the project and receive written approval from that individual.

Double major students must write two separate capstones in the two majors in which they would like to graduate.

## 1.3 Capstone Supervisor and Capstone Reader

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the document when the word Capstone is used, its usage includes all assessed components. The word Thesis, on the other hand, refers solely to the final written product (Final Thesis).

Every student will need a supervisor for their research project. It is each student's responsibility to find an appropriate supervisor for their Capstone.

Students can only be supervised by an AUC Lecturer (core faculty staff members, partner faculty staff members teaching at AUC, or faculty staff members teaching at AUC on a short-term basis) or by a member of an AUC partner institution (UvA, AMC, VUMC or VU) that does not currently teach at AUC. The supervisor should preferably hold a PhD and have a background, either in teaching or in research, in the student's major(s). For pre-law track students who wish to eventually enter the Civiel Effect schakeljaar vrijstellingstraject at the UvA law faculty, the supervisor must have a graduate degree in law (LLM, JD or PhD, or equivalent).

A student should feel free to contact individuals in their immediate network (e.g. lecturers that they have had during their studies, et cetera) for supervision, but they should also look beyond that network as well. A good starting point would be AUC's faculty website ([www.auc.nl/about-auc/faculty/faculty.html](http://www.auc.nl/about-auc/faculty/faculty.html)), but students can also find potential supervisors by looking on the UvA and VU websites (searching relevant faculties and departments, et cetera). Also, the Capstone page on Canvas, under "AUC Student Information", has a list of past supervisors and readers; viewing this document may be helpful.

Each supervisor is compensated fifteen hours per Capstone project. If a Capstone has co-supervisors, the hours will be shared and only one supervisor can be the formal examiner. Supervisors are allowed to supervise a maximum of five projects per academic year. Exceptions to this rule can only be made by the Capstone Coordinator after consultation with the Director of Education.

Every supervisor, after consulting with the student, will need to find a reader for the research project. If a Capstone project has two supervisors due to its major-transcending interdisciplinarity, then the supervisor who is the formal examiner will be in charge of finding a reader. Only one reader is needed in these situations even though there are two supervisors.

Readers must either be an AUC Lecturer or a member of an AUC partner institution (see above, same section). In exceptional circumstances, the Capstone Coordinator can give a supervisor and student permission to find a reader outside of AUC and its partner institutions, but this permission will only be granted if the coordinator is convinced that looking outside of the existing institutional network is necessary. Supervisors and students should contact the Capstone Coordinator about this topic if they have any questions. Also, if the supervisor is not an AUC Lecturer, then it is advisable to find a reader that does currently teach within the programme. The reader should preferably hold a PhD and have a background, either in teaching or in research, in the student's major(s).

Readers will be allocated three hours for each readership. Readers are allowed to assess a maximum of five Capstones per academic year. Exceptions to this rule can only be made by the Capstone Coordinator after consultation with the Director of Education.

#### **1.4 Capstone Coordinator**

The Capstone Coordinator is responsible for monitoring and improving the Capstone process, including the Capstone Guidelines.

The Capstone Coordinator can also serve as a Capstone supervisor. To ensure that no conflicts of interest or problems arise in this situation, the student can consult with the relevant Head of Studies if needed.

Whenever questions or problems arise within a Capstone project, the Capstone Coordinator is the first point of contact ([Capstone@auc.nl](mailto:Capstone@auc.nl)), for supervisors and readers as well as students. The Capstone Coordinator is Wade Geary; he is assisted by Bob Kardolus, the Capstone Administrator. Please contact the Coordinator as soon as questions or problems emerge so that he can mediate/intervene in an adequate and timely fashion.

## 2. Timeline and Deadlines

- Students are advised to start thinking about and contacting possible supervisors early in their fifth semester (see timeline), just as they start Advanced Research Writing. Students who are planning to study abroad, and therefore would take Advanced Research Writing in their fourth semester, are advised to make earlier contact with possible supervisors, or they should be prepared to contact potential supervisors while they are on exchange.
- The student and supervisor should meet at least four times over the semester. The suggested meeting times are the following: an initial meeting, ideally held at the beginning of the semester; a meeting after the Research Proposal is completed and assessed; a meeting either after the Writing Update is completed or after the Draft of Thesis is completed; and a meeting to hold the Oral Evaluation. It is left to the discretion of the student and supervisor to plan additional meetings, if desired.
- The first of these meetings should be held at the beginning of the semester in which the Capstone will be carried out. This meeting should be used to discuss the student's initial ideas for the Capstone project.
- It is the supervisor's responsibility to find and assign a reader (in consultation with the student). We recommend that this consultation happens either at the beginning of the semester (during the first meeting) or closer to the mid-point of the semester (during the second meeting). The student will then be in charge of informing the Capstone team of the reader's name and details.
- It is important that the student and supervisor agree on the expectations for the Writing Update and Oral Evaluation during the meeting in which the feedback from the Research Proposal is given.
- All students are strongly advised to adhere to the Capstone Timeline. Note that the Final Thesis deadline is fixed: Capstones uploaded after the final deadline will automatically receive a 1.0 (see sections 5.2.2, and 5.2.3). *The supervisor and student can agree on different deadlines for all assessed components of the Capstone except the Final Thesis deadline.* If the supervisor and student deviate from the suggested deadlines, then the student should inform the Capstone team of this by sending an email to [Capstone@auc.nl](mailto:Capstone@auc.nl).
- *Important to note:* Students should be aware that supervisors and readers have 12 working days to provide feedback on assessments. Improper planning on the student's part may not necessarily constitute an emergency on the supervisor's part. Furthermore, the student should realise that the Capstone is 12 ECP, which amounts to a total work load of 336 hours, or 21 hours per week for 16 weeks.

### Student deadlines for 2022-2023, Semester 1

Date	Task
Fri 22 August, 23:59	Email the name of the supervisor and their contact information to Capstone Coordinator ( <a href="mailto:Capstone@auc.nl">Capstone@auc.nl</a> )
Wed 12 October, 23:59	Upload <b>Research Proposal</b> to Canvas and send to supervisor.
Wed 9 November, 23:59	Send agreed <b>Writing Update</b> to supervisor.
Wed 30 November 23:59	Upload <b>Draft of Thesis</b> to Canvas and send to supervisor.
Wed 21 December, 23:59	Upload <b>Final Thesis</b> to Canvas.
Fri 13 January, 23:59 (this is only the deadline for sending in the oral evaluation grading form; the oral evaluation meeting should be held in the preceding weeks)	<b>Oral Evaluation/Presentation</b>

### Student deadlines for 2022-2023, Semester 2

Date	Task
Fri 20 January, 23:59	Email the name of the supervisor and their contact information to Capstone Coordinator ( <a href="mailto:Capstone@auc.nl">Capstone@auc.nl</a> )
Wed 15 March, 23:59	Upload <b>Research Proposal</b> to Canvas and send to supervisor.
Wed 12 April, 23:59	Send agreed <b>Writing Update</b> to supervisor.
Wed 10 May, 23:59	Upload <b>Draft of Thesis</b> to Canvas and send to supervisor.
Wed 31 May, 23:59	Upload <b>Final Thesis</b> to Canvas.
Fri 16 June 23:59 (this is only the deadline for sending in the oral evaluation grading form; the oral evaluation meeting should be held in the preceding weeks)	<b>Oral Evaluation/Presentation</b>

### Supervisor (and Reader) deadlines, 2022-2023

Date	Task
<i>Semester 1:</i> Wed 9 November	Supervisor emails reader details to <a href="mailto:Capstone@auc.nl">Capstone@auc.nl</a> (cc-ing student)
<i>Semester 2:</i> Wed 12 April	
12 working days after student hands in their work	Provide feedback.  For the <b>Research Proposal</b> , the <b>Final Thesis</b> , and the <b>Oral Evaluation</b> , a grade needs to be given. In order to determine the grade, the assessor should fill out the grading form while applying the grading rubric. The grading form needs to be sent to <a href="mailto:Capstone@auc.nl">Capstone@auc.nl</a> .

## **3. Supervisor and Reader Responsibilities**

### **3.1 Supervisor**

The role of the supervisor is to guide the student through the entire Capstone process. Therefore, it's necessary for a student to have the same supervisor throughout the project.

Specific supervisor responsibilities include:

- Providing guidance, suggestions and written critique on all graded and non-graded parts of the Capstone;
- Setting up at least four meetings with the student during the Capstone process;
- Monitoring progress;
- Confirming that all thesis requirements have been met;
- Finding and assigning a reader (in consultation with the student);
- Reporting any suspicion of plagiarism and/or fraud (see section 5.2.4 of this document);
- Submitting all grades, via the appropriate grading forms, to the Capstone Coordinator ([Capstone@auc.nl](mailto:Capstone@auc.nl)) by the determined deadlines;
- Referring the student, if academic writing guidance is needed, to the AUC Writing Centre (for more information, see [here](#));
- Contacting the Capstone Coordinator ([capstone@auc.nl](mailto:capstone@auc.nl)) in case a student is unresponsive to email communication for an extended period of time.

Finally, a supervisor can take the initiative to contact the Head of Studies to pass on relevant information to the reader. This could include known or suspected errors and/or information about what role a student played or contributions within a collaborative project.

### **3.2 Reader**

The role of the reader is to evaluate the Final Thesis. They are not to be involved in capstone project as it progresses throughout the semester; their role is only to independently assess the Final Thesis of the Capstone. The reader should not consult with the supervisor while grading the capstone thesis. Note: if the reader suspects plagiarism, they should follow normal procedures as outlined in AUC's AS&P (see section 5.2.4 of this document).

If a reader feels insufficiently competent to assess a thesis they should contact the Head of Studies to find a solution. The Head of Studies can check with the supervisor about finding an alternate reader or find an alternate reader themselves.

## 4. Assessed Components

### 4.1 Research Proposal

Writing a research proposal is the first step in producing a Capstone. The supervisor must be satisfied the topic and approach discussed in the research proposal are sufficient and feasible; additionally, the research proposal must serve as an assurance that the supervisor and student share the same expectations in terms of research goals, activity, and workload. The research proposal should demonstrate the student's ability to compile research; select, evaluate, and analyse sources; and situate the working research question or thesis within a specific research context. The proposal should include an informed description of the research design and methodology as well as a strong indication of the significance of the question or thesis within the academic field. Additionally, the research proposal should be structured according to disciplinary conventions agreed upon by the student and supervisor and should be consistent in its use of either British English or American English.

The research proposal should contain the following information for submission:

#### 4.1.1 Overview of Proposed Research

- Title and subtitle (if applicable). The title should be brief, descriptive and specific, and should reflect the importance of the proposal by providing a clear statement of the project's subject.
- Name of author (with affiliation: AUC) and email address.
- Name of supervisor (with affiliation: AUC, VU, UvA) and email address.
- Name of reader (with affiliation: AUC, VU, UvA) and email address.
- Name of tutor
- Date of submission
- Name of major
- A list of abbreviations, if applicable
- Summary: a self-contained description of the activity to be undertaken, including: (a) overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives; (b) general plans (activities) to accomplish project goal(s); and (c) larger significance of the study.
- Five keywords

#### 4.1.2 Description of Proposed Research

- Introduction: A brief description of the project, including the rationale, research objectives and questions to be addressed. The broader relevance of the research question and/or thesis should also be addressed, not only across the academic field, but also beyond it in terms of societal, cultural, environmental, political and/or interdisciplinary implications.
- Research context: In this section, students should situate their working thesis or research question within the scholarly discussion of their selected topic in the academic field. Key studies that have been used to generate the question or thesis should be identified, grouped, and synthesized. Secondary questions arising from a survey of the approaches taken to the subject, or from specific studies, should be identified and tested against the thesis or question.
- Methodology: In this section, students should identify and describe the discipline-specific or interdisciplinary methods required to conduct their analysis of the data and/or primary and secondary source materials in developing their research question or thesis. While these methods will vary across disciplines, students must demonstrate an awareness of the range of methods available and provide their rationale for the selected methods. At this point in their studies, students should be aware of what methods are available and appropriate for their project. If a student has any questions about the availability and appropriateness of a specific method, or about their complete methodology, then the student should discuss this with their supervisor. The Capstone Coordinator and the Heads of Studies are also available for further consultation.

- Ethics: In cases where the Capstone project requires human participants, the AUC Ethics Committee's [checklist](#) must be completed and added to the proposal. If the Capstone project is part of another, broader project, and as such has already been approved by an Ethics Committee, then this form does not need to be filled out, but written proof of prior ethical approval from an accredited METC (Medisch Ethische Toesingscommissie) needs to be included, also see <http://www.ccmo.nl/en>. For animal experiments proof of approval (Project License number) from the Central Authority for Scientific Procedures on Animals (Centrale Commissie Dierproeven, CCD) should be provided, see <https://www.centralecommissiedierproeven.nl>.

If students are looking for further guidance with regards to approaching their research in an ethical manner, they should visit the "Ethics & Integrity (in Research)" Canvas page. You can get there by visiting the "AUC Student Information" page and then clicking on "Pages". This page has more information about research ethics, consent guidelines, etc.

If supervisors have questions about research ethics and/or do not have access to the above-mentioned Canvas page, then they should contact the Capstone Coordinator.

#### 4.1.3 Works Cited

- All references cited should be complete and the referencing style should conform to one of the standard style guides in the academic field, e.g. MLA, APA, or CSE ; if a student is unclear about what style would best fit their project, then they should consult with their supervisor.

#### 4.1.4 Expected Writing Update

- Description of the agreed upon writing update product (see below).

#### 4.1.5 Word Count

- The word count range for the proposal (including footnotes; excluding title, abstract, works cited, and appendices) per major is:
  - Science majors: between 1.000 and 2.000 words.
  - Social Science majors: between 1.500 and 2.500 words
  - Humanities majors: between 1.500 and 2.500 words
  - Interdisciplinary (across majors): between 2.000 and 2.500 words

#### *Grading*

The supervisor will grade and provide substantive written feedback on the Research Proposal based on the Final Thesis rubric, specifically focusing on learning outcomes 1-3 and 6-7 (see section 6 of this document).

The supervisor should make sure that the student is able to proceed with their research at this point of the project. If the supervisor feels like the research question/thesis statement or the methodology is insufficient at this point, then it should be made clear to the student that the direction of the project needs to be revised or rethought. The supervisor may ask for a memorandum of understanding from the student at this point to make certain that the feedback on the Research Proposal is understood.

#### **4.2 Writing Update**

The student is expected to follow the research-writing process carefully, to keep on top of the drafting process, and carefully finish and edit the Capstone. For this reason, the supervisor and student agree upon a product early in the Capstone process (a significant writing update, such as a first chapter, a description of the experimental set-up or a presentation of preliminary results, etc.) that should be handed in around midterm as a sign of progress and a moment to receive feedback.

### *Grading*

The supervisor will perform a formative assessment. It is recommended that the supervisor gives feedback using the Final Thesis rubric (see section 6 of this document), as a guide to indicate where a student currently stands and where improvements need to be made for the Final Thesis. The supervisor may choose to give an indicative 'mock' grade.

### **4.3 Draft of Thesis**

Three weeks before the final deadline, a full draft of the thesis should be handed in. It is highly recommended this version is as close to the final product as possible in order to receive complete feedback.

### *Grading*

The supervisor will perform a formative assessment. This means the supervisor will give substantive written feedback to the student using the Final Thesis rubric (see section 6) as a guide. The supervisor may choose to give an indicative 'mock' grade. Additionally, they may ask the student to hand in a reflection along with the Final Thesis to make clear what has been revised from the Draft of the Final Thesis.

### **4.4 Oral Evaluation/Presentation**

In the final weeks of the Capstone process, the supervisor and the student should arrange an oral evaluation that is meant as a concluding moment of the capstone. The aim of this evaluation is to assess the student's communication skills; specifically, the supervisor should assess the student's ability to display subject mastery, generate and manage a discussion, and engage listeners/audience.

The supervisor and student should agree upon which type of oral evaluation a student will have. One of the following types of oral evaluations should be chosen:

1. a one-on-one discussion/conversation about the final thesis between student and supervisor;
2. a larger discussion/conversation with at least two discussion partners, of which one could be a student;
3. a presentation/defense for the supervisor, and possibly:
  - a. academics in a research group or department
  - b. fellow capstone students
  - c. fellow students in a class (i.e. a guest lecture)
  - d. the reader.

Note it is possible to have an alternative form of oral evaluation/presentation as long as the learning outcomes are still met. Students and supervisors should feel free to consult with the Capstone Coordinator about this assessment if they have any questions about how they should proceed.

The timing of the Oral Evaluation is between the student and supervisor. The window of time when it should be held is anytime between the student's deadline for the Full Draft and the supervisor's deadline for the Final Thesis grading forms. We advise participants to choose a time that works best given the availability of the participants and the chosen approach to the oral evaluation (as well as other factors).

### *Grading*

The supervisor will grade and provide substantive written feedback on the oral evaluation, basing it on the Oral Evaluation rubric (see section 6).

### **4.5 Final Thesis**

The Final Thesis (the finished product of the Capstone) should reflect the student's overall achievement throughout the curriculum. It should demonstrate the acquisition of research, writing, and critical thinking skills within and/or across disciplines; the ability of the student to work independently; their capacity to design and execute a complex research project; and their ability to make broader connections to other disciplines

and/or society. The Final Thesis should be structured according to disciplinary conventions agreed upon by the student and supervisor and should be consistent in its use of either British English or American English.

The Final Thesis should contain the following information for submission:

- Title and subtitle (if applicable): The title should be concise and specific, and provide a clear statement of the subject of the research.
- Name of author (with affiliation: AUC) and email address
- Name of supervisor (with affiliation: AUC, VU, UvA) and email address
- Name of reader (with affiliation: AUC, VU, UvA) and email address
- Name of tutor
- Date of submission
- Name of major
- Word count of main text (see end of this section)
- Abstract: a self-contained description of the activity undertaken, including: (a) thesis statement or research question; (b) methods; and (c) results or findings of the study
- Five keywords/key phrases, at minimum
- A list of abbreviations, if applicable
- Introduction (see 4.1.2)
- Research context (see 4.1.2)
- Methodology (see 4.1.2): even though there are disciplinary differences in how transparently the methodology is reported, it is mandatory to include a separate section on this for empirical theses in the (social) sciences. It is highly recommended for literature reviews and theoretical work to include a section on how material was sourced (i.e. databased use, search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria for sources etc.).
- For pre-law track students who wish to eventually enter the Civiel Effect schakeljaar vrijstellingstraject at the UvA law faculty, the capstone must be at least 50% based on a legal problem statement. A legal problem statement is defined as being a clear legal research question: 1. that is embedded in the disciplinary context, i.e. sources of law and legal literature; 2. of which the author explains the importance in legal theory and/or the socio-legal relevance of answering the question; 3. of which the different underlying (legal) concepts and elements are explained; 4. of which the research methods, used by the author to answer the question, are described. The thesis supervisor of a qualifying project should send an email to the Capstone Coordinator (with the Pre-Law Track Coordinator in CC) which declares the thesis to be sufficiently legal, based on the on the criteria above. The Capstone Coordinator will then send the declaration along to the Board of Examiners so that the student can receive an official declaration from AUC.

The final structure of the capstone can vary widely between capstones in different disciplines. The student should discuss the structure with their supervisor if they have any questions. Generally speaking, the student should consider how to optimize the structure of the project and when it would be best to use chapters, sections, etc. in order to write their Capstone in the most cohesive and coherent manner possible.

#### 4.5.1 *Sciences and Empirical Social Sciences*

- Results/Findings: A succinct characterization of the findings is given, complemented with visual presentation in tables, charts and/or figures, if possible and appropriate. The writing should be centred on the presentation of the data (qualitative or quantitative). In a literature review thesis, this section succinctly summarizes the findings of the sources in a logical narrative.
- Discussion/Analysis: The results are connected to the literature in the academic field, particularly to theoretical debates. Assumptions and inherent limitations of the study are also discussed, and the section may conclude by considering the broader relevance of the research findings (beyond the discipline), such as societal, cultural, environmental, or managerial implications.

#### 4.5.2 *Humanities and Theoretical Social Sciences*

- Discussion/Analysis: The discussion comprises the main section of the Capstone. It offers a focused inquiry into a topic with original analysis and argumentation. The contours of the thesis, as well as the methodological approaches employed, will vary according to academic field and discipline, but it develops by drawing from specific texts and/or artefacts, considering these within an established research and/or theoretical framework, and detailing the analysis or interpretation.

#### 4.5.3 *Conclusion*

- The conclusion should provide a succinct summary of the argument in light of the findings, the significance of findings within the broader theoretical foundations of the discipline, and the scope for additional future research.

#### 4.5.4 *Works Cited*

- All references cited should be complete and consistent, and the referencing style should conform to one of the standard style guides in the academic field, e.g. MLA, APA, or CSE; if a student is unclear about what style would best fit their project, then they should consult with their supervisor.

#### 4.5.5 *Word Count*

- The word count range for the Final Thesis (including footnotes; excluding title, abstract, works cited, and appendices) per major is:
  - Science majors: between 5.000 and 10.000 words
  - Social Science majors: between 7.500 and 12.500 words
  - Humanities majors: between 7.500 and 12.500 words
  - Interdisciplinary (across majors): between 5.000 and 12.500 words

If a student cannot reach the word count or must exceed the word count, they should ask for written permission from their supervisor and reader to hand in a document that is outside of the official word count; if permission is granted, then the student should inform the Capstone Coordinator no later than 19 December (autumn) or 29 May (spring), by submitting a justification and copy of the supervisor's and reader's permission to [capstone@auc.nl](mailto:capstone@auc.nl). Uploading a Final Thesis that is under or over the word count without approval may affect the final grade (see Section 6, rubric 7).

#### *Grading*

The supervisor and reader will grade and provide substantive written feedback on the Final Thesis based on the Final Thesis rubric (see Section 6 of this document). When assessing the Final Thesis, the assessor can focus on all 7 learning outcomes that are mentioned in the Final Thesis rubric. If a Final Thesis is handed in and the student does not have a supervisor or if the supervisor claims to have not been involved with the capstone, then it cannot be assessed properly and will automatically receive a 1.0 (non-passing grade). Exceptions will be made for extenuating circumstances (supervisor withdrew, et cetera).

## 5. Capstone Grades

### 5.1 Relative Weights of Components

The final grade is calculated by applying the specific criteria to the grade components below:

- Research Proposal, graded by Supervisor (15%)
- Writing Update, assessed by Supervisor (formative)
- Final Draft, assessed by Supervisor (formative)
- Oral Evaluation, graded by Supervisor (15%)
- Final Thesis, graded by Supervisor (35%)
- Final Thesis, graded by Reader (35%)

The separate components of the Capstone, as well as the final Capstone grade, will be calculated using AUC's grading scale (1 – 10).

*Disclaimer:* Students should be aware that theses grades cannot be as precise as, for instance, a quantitative test because of the encompassing and holistic nature of a thesis. Also, note the grading may not be the same across theses, because of the diversity of academic backgrounds of supervisors and readers, and the different weights they may apply in grading. Students are advised to discuss with their supervisor where the key focus should be and to ask the supervisor for an explanation of the awarded grades (if the student has questions beyond the feedback provided on the grading forms).

### 5.2 Grading Procedures

Once the supervisor and reader grades (per Capstone) have been handed in, a member of the Capstone team (either the Capstone Coordinator or the Capstone Administrator) will calculate the Final Capstone Grade (i.e., weighted average of the graded components as described in section 5.1) and inform the student, supervisor, and reader via e-mail of the final grade, attaching all grading forms. The grading process should be completed 12 working days after the final deadline. Grade discrepancies may cause delays, but students will be informed by a member of the Capstone team of the estimated delay.

#### 5.2.1 Grade Discrepancies/Single Failing Final Thesis Grade

If the supervisor's and the reader's Final Thesis grades differ by more than 15% or in case either the supervisor or reader assesses the Final Thesis as being non-passing, the Capstone Coordinator will ask the relevant Head of Studies to mediate and make a short report of a discussion between the supervisor and reader. The aim of this discussion is to see whether it is possible to reduce the gap in the two different capstone grades to less than 15% or come to an agreement about whether the capstone is worthy of a passing grade. If agreement on either, or both, of these issues is not possible, then the Head of Studies will appoint a third assessor and will advise the Board of Examiners of the calculation of the final grade based on the three different grades. The BoE decides on the Final Thesis grade (70%) and will communicate their decision to the Capstone Coordinator and Capstone Administrator.

#### 5.2.2 Submission Past the Deadline and Failed Capstones

Capstones with a Final Thesis which is assessed as non-passing (both assessors giving the thesis a non-passing grade originally or both assessors agreeing the capstone is not worthy of a passing grade during mediation [see 5.2.1]) or Capstones which are not handed in on time, therefore receiving a grade of 1.0, must go through the Capstone Retry process. In the Capstone Retry process, the student is allowed ten days (not including weekends and holidays), after notification by a member of the Capstone team, to remedy the Capstone failure by reworking the Final Thesis. The original non-passing grade *will*, however, appear on the student's transcript, along with any subsequent passing grade. Capstone failures can be remedied only once per semester. If a student still receives a non-passing grade after their second attempt, the student will need to write a new Capstone in the following semester (using a different research question/thesis). A change in supervision may be advisable but is not officially required.

If a student asks and receives a course reduction that includes the Capstone, then they should register for the Capstone the following semester. The student is not allowed to continue with the same Capstone project (thesis/research question) if any parts of the Capstone were assessed in the initial semester.

### 5.2.3 Extensions

If a delay is reasonably expected, Final Thesis extensions should be requested from the Board of Examiners at least two weeks before the final deadline, except in cases of force majeure. Extension requests should be properly motivated and include documentation when necessary.

### 5.2.4 Plagiarism and Fraud

The Capstone Coordinator performs plagiarism checks of the submitted files. Plagiarism and fraud will be handled according to the regulations governing fraud and plagiarism (Appendix 2 AS&P). Note that drawing from/elaborating on materials from a student's own work in Advanced Research Writing does not count as self-plagiarism if clear references and/or citations are made. Additionally, the student may draw from their Research Proposal for the Final Thesis.

## 5.3 Capstones of Distinction

The top 15% of Capstones in each major will be considered for AUC's *Thesis of Distinction*. The number of awards per year is not limited, and Capstones are judged by a committee comprised of lecturers from each major.

### 5.3.1 Procedure for Nomination and Selection

- The Capstone Distinction Committee, installed by the Director of Education, will convene to judge the Capstones.
- The top 15% of Capstones in each major, based on the *average* grade of the Final Thesis, will be submitted to the Capstone Distinction Committee. If a Capstone qualifies for distinction after the Capstone Distinction Committee meets, then a member of the committee will assess it when possible.
- A selection of nominees will be invited to present their Capstone project as a part of the college-wide Capstone Seminar.

### 5.3.2 Criteria for Thesis of Distinction

Capstones will be evaluated based on the degree to which high standards were met in all grading criteria judged by the supervisor and the reader *and* according to the following categories as judged by the awards committee:

- *Advanced level*: Does this Capstone go beyond expectations according to these guidelines and rubrics? Could it be prepared for possible publication? Could it be considered at the level of a master's thesis?
- *Originality and Innovation*: Does the Capstone manifest originality and/or innovation in its approach, content, and/or writing style? Does it significantly contribute to the body of knowledge in the field?
- *Contextual thinking*: Is the subject of the Capstone viewed from a broad perspective? Does it, for instance, demonstrate cross-disciplinary literacy and make connections across different fields of knowledge, *and/or* does it make explicit connections between the research findings and society?

## 6. Grading Rubrics

### ***Final Thesis Rubric***

While some rubrics can be strictly applied (i.e. a weighted sum of scores per category), the following rubric is meant to support the assessor not only in determining the grade for the Capstone, but also in providing the written motivation for that grade. The motivation (at least 300 words) should be included in the corresponding section of the Final Thesis form supplied by the Capstone Coordinator. The motivation should also make clear how different categories are weighted (in general words, not per se % weights), especially when some categories weigh in heavily (e.g. academic competencies weigh heavily when a Capstone involves advanced or extensive empirical research, whether it be qualitative/observational methods or physical experiments).

The Supervisor is strongly encouraged to work with these rubrics and the corresponding grading forms from the start of the Capstone process (see 4.2).

<b>Intended learning outcome<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>0-5.5 - insufficient (I)</b>	<b>5.5-7.2 - sufficient (S)</b>	<b>7.3-8.5 - good (G)</b>	<b>8.6-10 very good/excellent (E)</b>
1. Quality of the research question and/or thesis statement	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). The research question and/or thesis statement is poorly articulated and not supported enough by academic sources.	Research topic is suitable; the research question and/or thesis statement is simple but sufficiently informed and supported by academic sources.	Goes beyond the criteria under (S), the research question and/or thesis statement is well articulated and sufficiently complex. It is clearly situated in a specific academic field.	Meets the criteria under (G). The research question and/or thesis statement is focused and complex. It addresses a viable research gap and could potentially make an original contribution to the academic field.
2. Review/synthesis of literature/research context	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). Research literature is sporadically sampled; peer-reviewed articles, chapters and/or book-length studies are insufficiently used; online sources are misused.	Sufficient coverage of academic sources relevant to the research question/thesis, with method of review apparent if not always systematically applied.	Goes beyond the criteria under (S), comprehensive and critical coverage of academic sources relevant to the research question/thesis, with a systematic method of review.	In addition to the criteria under (G), the relevant literature is effectively synthesized and used to situate the research question/ thesis.

<sup>1</sup> See Section 1 of this document

3. Methodology	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). No clear methodology is articulated or used in the collection, synthesis and/or engagement with primary and/or secondary data sources. No clear relationship exists between the methodology and research question/thesis. Ethical requirements not met.	Methodology is appropriate to the research question and is clearly articulated; the collection, synthesis and/or engagement with primary or secondary data sources is of sufficient quality and meets ethics requirements (where applicable).	In addition to (S), methodological selection demonstrates an awareness of a range of methodological approaches; the collection, synthesis, and/or engagement with primary or secondary data sources is of high quality.	In addition to the criteria under (G), the methodology used represents an innovative approach to the research question.
4. Analysis and Argument	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). The argument is non-existent or weak; the analysis of data and/or primary and secondary texts is absent or flawed and does not reflect what is required by the research question/thesis.  The findings do not relate to the research question. The description of the problem and/or findings is incomplete or unclear.	The argument/analysis is present and sufficiently developed. The analysis of data and/or primary and secondary texts is insufficient and reflects a concerted attempt to implement the methodology. The claims/findings are supported by tables and figures, and/or evidence from the text.	Goes beyond the criteria under (S), the argument/analysis is consistent and well-developed. The analysis of data and/or primary and secondary texts is rigorous. The claims/findings are solid Findings are closely related to the research question, and there is coherence between these elements.	In addition to the criteria under (G), the student demonstrates awareness of the process of analysis, either implicitly or explicitly. The student clearly guides the reader to the main findings by effectively using arguments, tables, and graphs where appropriate.
5. Discussion and implications	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). The societal relevance (if applicable) lacks or is not connected to the results;	There is a concise description of the implications of the results; Some notions are included about the social relevance and opportunities for further	Goes beyond the criteria under (S), there is a near-comprehensive description of the implications of the results; The social	In addition to the criteria under (G), the student presents a compelling argument for the broader significance or academic value of the student's

	Opportunities for further studies are not specific or not based on the study outcomes; no limitations are mentioned.	studies; Limitations are sufficiently highlighted.	relevance and implications for further studies are discussed in relation to the outcomes of the study; Important limitations are brought forward.	research, demonstrating, for instance, cross-disciplinary literacy <i>and/or</i> making implicit or explicit connections between the research findings and society.
6. Organization and structure	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). Disjointed, incomplete or incoherent; required sections are missing or inadequately developed; Does not adhere to AUC's expectations in terms of formatting and style, with missing citations or bibliography; Notable presence of grammar and spelling errors.	Document is complete and structure is generally coherent, if disjointed or limited in places; Adheres to correct spelling and grammar, formatting and style, but with errors.	Goes beyond the criteria under (S). Document proceeds coherently through all required sections; Adheres to disciplinary conventions in terms of format and style, with a few errors; Limited grammar and spelling errors.	Goes beyond the criteria under (G). Cogently structured, with chapters and/or sections contributing to cohesive and compelling narrative; Fully adheres to disciplinary conventions in terms of format and style: Very few, if any, grammar and spelling errors.
7. Effective written communication	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). Writing is not sufficiently clear, concise or engaged; sentences limited in complexity and variety. Word count is exceeded without necessity or approval.	Writing and flow of information is generally clear and understandable.	Meets the criteria under (S); Evidence of a (developing) scholarly voice and conveys the academic content in a convincing way.	In addition to the criteria under (G), compellingly engages scholarly audience, while being clear and accessible to various communities of practice.

**Oral Evaluation Rubric**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>0-5.5 - insufficient (I)</b>	<b>5.5-7.2 - sufficient (S)</b>	<b>7.3-8.5 - good (G)</b>	<b>8.6-10 very good/excellent (E)</b>
Subject mastery	Claims are typically unsupported assertions that lack sufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities). The student fails to develop arguments because of a lack of independent analysis. The student's subject mastery is insufficient.	Claims are clearly stated, while supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make periodic reference to information or analysis that partially supports the oral evaluation. Some claims do not have sufficient support. The student's subject mastery on the topic is sufficient.	Claims are stated with relative clarity and supported with a variety of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities). The student periodically integrates their own analysis into the speech. The student generally masters the subject well.	Claims are clearly stated, and thoroughly explained with a combination of evidence and the speaker's own analysis. A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) are used to develop ideas. The student shows exceptional subject mastery.
Communication skills	Student cannot sufficiently answer questions about subject or can only answer rudimentary questions; The central message is not understandable or memorable.	Student is able to answer questions adequately. Answers do not always display original or very deep thinking; Central message is generally clear, but sometimes drift to the background.	Student can answer all questions with explanation. Some answers or comments display deep understanding and/or originality; Central message is clear and consistent.	Student can answer all questions with explanation and elaboration. Most answers or comments display deep understanding (or even profound thought) and/or originality; Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)
Academic Competencies (assessing other aspects of the Capstone project, including both tangible and intangible qualities not assessed previously, either in the Final Thesis or in the Oral Evaluation; aspects may include academic development/growth, project management,	The work does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). The student relied too much on the Supervisor, did not keep to agreements and deadlines, and in general showed a lack of independence and initiative. The student did not develop much academically over the semester. Successful work habits may have been lacking.	The student works independently; Takes feedback seriously and processes it appropriately; Is usually able to manage their work and to keep to agreements and meet deadlines. The student does not develop academically to a minimal degree throughout the semester. Work habits are sufficient, but they may need further cultivation.	In addition to (S), student recognizes the need for assistance or feedback and takes initiative to improve. The student's academic development is noticeable and serious. Student likely shows strong work habits.  <i>For empirical research, the data collection/experiments are carried out with effort and skill and the work is</i>	In addition to the criteria under (G), demonstrates full ownership and responsibility for the project. The student's academic development is impressive and remarkable. Work habits are likely outstanding and led to a successful capstone project.  <i>For empirical research, in addition to (G) the data collection/experiments are</i>

<p>lab skills, work habits, etc.)</p>	<p><i>For empirical research, the data collection/experiments are carried out with little effort or skill and/or they are carelessly documented. In collaborative work, the student did not engage effectively with collaborators.</i></p>	<p><i>For empirical research, the data collection/experiments are carried out with effort and the work is organized and documented. In collaborative work, the student was a cooperative and engaged team player.</i></p>	<p>well-organized and carefully documented. In collaborative work, the student was a cooperative and engaged team player who contributed good independent ideas.</p>	<p>carried out meticulously and efficiently with foresight and/or creative initiative. The work is documented carefully and clearly enough for another researcher to repeat the study. In collaborative work, the student contributed consequential and valuable independent ideas within their team.</p>
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