

Capstone Guidelines 2024-2025

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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.

1.1 Intended Learning Outcomes

The Capstone¹ 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 the 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 by reflecting on, discussing and/or presenting their research.
8. The student works independently, shows initiative, and takes ownership of the Capstone process and results. Furthermore, the student takes feedback seriously and processes it appropriately; is able to manage their work and to keep to agreements and meet deadlines. The student demonstrates sufficient critical and reflective competency.

These learning outcomes contribute to the following intended learning outcomes of AUC's programme, as listed in the Academic Standards and Procedures (AS&P, Section 2.3): 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2e, 2g, 3a, 3b, 3d, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 7a, 7b, 7c.

1.2 Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity

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

¹ 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).

perspective as this 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 who choose this path should consider having 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.

1.3 Capstone process and generative AI tools

AUC currently allows supervisors to decide if, how, and to what extent supervisees can use generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini) for their Capstone research. At the very start of the Capstone process supervisors and supervisees have to schedule a meeting in which supervisors are asked to specify how exactly a student is or is not allowed to use these tools during the Capstone (writing) process. These instructions have to be recorded in Datanose, as part of the grading rubric for the Research Proposal assignment (this is the moment when it is formally recorded in Datanose, but the meeting should take place at the start of the Capstone process). To help formulate these guidelines for students, supervisors can take inspiration from the AI policy document that is used in AUC's writing courses *Academic Writing Skills (AWS)* and *Advanced Research Writing (ARW)* (see Appendix). It should be noted, however, that supervisors can formulate their own guidelines and can deviate from the AWS/ARW AI policy document.

Furthermore, supervisors are encouraged to place an (even) stronger emphasis on the research and writing *process* as a way of actively engaging the student in the Capstone project. To facilitate this, students have to write a one-page reflection for each major assignment (i.e. the Research Proposal, the Writing Update and the Final Thesis), in which they reflect on the research and writing process. These reflection documents can then be discussed during the supervision meetings. These discussions will also prepare the students for the Oral Assessment & Academic Competency Assignment.

1.4 Capstone Supervisor and Capstone Reader

Every student will need a supervisor for their research project. It is the 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, VU or Amsterdam UMC) who does not currently teach at AUC. The supervisor must have completed a PhD, have a background, either in teaching or in research, in the student's major and should principally supervise theses within their field of expertise.

In cases where a Capstone supervisor does not have a PhD, equivalence needs to be demonstrated based on publication record and independent research experience. The student can ask their potential supervisor if they have a publication record and independent research experience and then share this information with the Capstone Coordinator by sending an email to capstone@auc.nl. The Capstone Coordinator will then consult the Board of Examiners, who will ultimately decide if an exception to the PhD criterion can be made. The Capstone Coordinator will share the BoE decision with the student.

For pre-law track students who wish to eventually enter the Civiel Effect schakeljaar vrijstellingstraject at the UvA law faculty, the Capstone supervisor must have a graduate degree in law (LLM, JD or PhD, or equivalent).

To find a supervisor, students should feel free to contact individuals in their immediate network (e.g., lecturers that they have had during their studies, et cetera), 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), 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 the AUC Student Information site has a list of past supervisors and readers, categorised by major.

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. If a Capstone has co-supervisors, the work will be shared between the two individuals. One individual would act as the primary supervisor (“formal examiner”) and would be in charge of all Capstone assessments; the other individual would act as the secondary supervisor and would be involved in an advisory role.

Every supervisor, after consulting with the student, will need to find a reader for the research project. We strongly recommend working with supervisor and reader pairs that form a mix of AUC core faculty and Uva/VU/Amsterdam UMC partner faculty. This allows for variation in assessment pairs and also creates an opportunity to bring in additional research expertise from different faculties. 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). 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 if they have any questions.

The reader must have completed a PhD and have a background, either in teaching or in research, in the student’s major. In cases where a Capstone reader does not have a PhD, equivalence needs to be demonstrated based on publication record and independent research experience. The student or supervisor can ask their potential reader if they have a publication record and independent research experience and then share this information with the Capstone Coordinator by sending an email to capstone@auc.nl. The Capstone Coordinator will then consult the Board of Examiners, who will ultimately decide if an exception to the PhD criterion can be made. The Capstone Coordinator will share the BoE decision with the student.

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.

1.5 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), for supervisors and readers as well as students. Please contact the coordinator as soon as questions or problems emerge so they 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 below), 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 as follows: 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 and the supervisor's guidelines/perspective on the use of GenAI tools during the Capstone process (see Section 1.3 above).
- It is the supervisor's responsibility to find and assign a reader (in consultation with the student). We recommend 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). Both the student and the supervisor will be able to add the reader's details onto Datanose.
- 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.*
- *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 does not constitute an emergency on the supervisor's part. Furthermore, the student should realise that the Capstone is 12 ECP, which amounts to a total workload of 336 hours, or 21 hours per week for 16 weeks.

Student deadlines for 2024-2025, Semester 1

Date	Task
Fri 16 August, 23:59	Add the supervisor's name and contact information to Portal.
Wed 9 October, 23:59	Upload Research Proposal to Portal.
Wed 6 November, 23:59	Upload Writing Update to Portal.
Wed 27 November 23:59	Upload Draft of Thesis to Portal.
Wed 18 December, 23:59	Upload Final Thesis to Portal.
Mon 13 January, 23:59 (this is only the deadline for completing the assessment of the oral evaluation; the oral evaluation meeting should be held in the preceding weeks)	Oral Evaluation/Presentation

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Student deadlines for 2024-2025, Semester 2

Date	Task
Fri 17 January, 23:59	Add the supervisor's name and contact information to Portal.
Wed 19 March, 23:59	Upload Research Proposal to Portal.
Wed 16 April, 23:59	Upload Writing Update to Portal.
Wed 7 May, 23:59	Upload Draft of Thesis to Portal
Wed 28 May, 23:59	Upload Final Thesis to Portal.
Fri 13 June 23:59 (this is only the deadline for completing the assessment of the oral evaluation & academic competencies; the oral evaluation meeting should be held in the preceding weeks)	Oral Evaluation/Presentation

Supervisor (and Reader) deadlines, 2024-2025

Date	Task
<i>Semester 1:</i> Wed 6 November	Supervisor holds a conversation with the supervisee about whom might be best positioned to take on the role of reader. The reader's name and contact information must be added by either the supervisor or the student; it is the final step before the Final Thesis is uploaded.
<i>Semester 2:</i> Wed 9 April	
12 working days after student hands in their work	Provide feedback. For the Research Proposal , the Final Thesis , and the Oral Evaluation & Academic Competencies , a grade needs to be given. To determine the grade, the assessor should fill out the grading form on Datanose while applying the grading rubric.

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 feedback 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;
- Suggesting that their supervisees hold informal conversations with other professors and lecturers if a supervisor's expertise does not (fully) cover the content or methods that are explored in the Capstone project;
- 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 to AUC's Board of Examiners (see section 5.2.4 of this document and Appendix 2 of AUC's AS&P);
- Grading all assessed assignments and confirming the final grade on Datanose;
- 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) in case a student is unresponsive to email communication for an extended period.

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 another reader or find another reader themselves.

4. Assessed Components

4.1 Research Proposal

Writing a research proposal is the first step in producing a Capstone. The supervisor evaluates whether 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, Amsterdam UMC) and email address.
- Name of reader (with affiliation: AUC, VU, UvA, Amsterdam UMC) and email address. (Note: the reader may not be known at this point; often this topic is not discussed and/or decided by this time).
- 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/key phrases

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 or supervisors are looking for further guidance with regards to ethically approaching the research, they should visit [the "Ethics & Integrity \(in Research\)"](#) page on the AUC Student Information website.

- One-page reflection (~300-500 words) on the research writing process: In this reflection, students can address issues such as the following: choosing and narrowing down their topic; type, selection and relevance of sources; challenges during the research process and/or the writing process; reflection on GenAI usage, if applicable (see Section 1.3). This reflection will be discussed in a supervision meeting and will be graded as part of the Oral Assessment and Academic Competency Assignment. Students can consult the chapter on 'Reflective Writing' of the AUC Writing Manual (available on Canvas).

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, CSE, etc.; 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 Research Proposal (including footnotes; excluding title, summary, works cited, appendices, and one-page reflection) is between 1.500 and 2.500 words. This range applies to students in all majors.

Grading

The supervisor will grade and provide substantive written feedback on the Research Proposal based on the rubric on Datanose. We advise supervisors to make sure that qualitative comments, rubric points and final grades align to avoid any substantial or perceived differences between the qualitative comments and the numeric grades.

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 confirm 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.

Also for this assignment, the student submits a one-page reflection (~300-500 words) on the research writing process (see details above, Research Proposal Assignment). This reflection will be discussed in a supervision meeting and will be graded as part of the Oral Assessment and Academic Competency Assignment.

Grading

The supervisor will perform a formative assessment. 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 for the student to receive constructive feedback.

Grading

The supervisor will perform a formative assessment. The supervisor may choose to give an indicative 'mock' grade. Additionally, they may ask the student to include a short text along with the Final Thesis in which the student describes what they revised from the Draft of Thesis to the Final Thesis.

4.4 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 as well as 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
- Student's 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 (suggested word range: 150 - 250)
- 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 the material was sourced (i.e. database use, search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria for sources, et cetera).

- For pre-law track students who wish to eventually enter the Civiel Effect schakeljaar vrijstellingstraject at the UvA Law Faculty, at least 50% of the Capstone must be based on a legal problem statement. A legal problem statement is defined as a clear legal research question that meets the following criteria: (1) it is embedded in the disciplinary context, i.e. sources of law and legal literature; (2) it states the importance and/or the socio-legal relevance of the question within legal theory; (3) it explains the different underlying (legal) concepts and elements; (4) it describes the research methods as used by the student to address the question. The Capstone supervisor of a qualifying project should send an email to the Pre-Law Track Coordinator (name available on Capstone Canvas page) with the Capstone Coordinator in CC. In the email, the Capstone Supervisor states that the project meets the requirements. The Pre-Law Track Coordinator will then forward this email to the Board of Examiners so that the student can receive an official confirmation from AUC.
- One-page reflection (~300-500 words) on the research writing process: In this reflection, students can address issues such as the following: methodological decisions and choices; challenges during the research process or the writing process; reflection on GenAI usage, if applicable (see Section 1.3). Please note that students are asked to reflect on the progress of their research and the ongoing research and writing process. Concretely, this means that this second reflection can show some overlap with the first reflection, but should also deviate significantly and provide different/new insights. This reflection will be discussed in a supervision meeting and will be graded as part of the Oral Assessment and Academic Competency Assignment.

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 optimise the structure of the project (e.g. number of chapters/sections/subsections) in order to write a coherent and clearly structured Capstone.

4.4.1 Sciences and Empirical Social Sciences

- **Results/Findings:** A succinct characterisation of the findings is given, complemented with a visual presentation in tables, charts and/or figures, if possible and appropriate. The writing should be centered around the presentation of the data (qualitative or quantitative). In a literature review thesis, this section succinctly summarises 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 policy implications.

4.4.2 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.

4.4.3 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.

4.4.4 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, CSE, etc.; if a student is unclear about what style would best fit their project, then they should consult with their supervisor.

4.4.5 Word Count

- The word count range for the Final Thesis (including footnotes and image, table, and graph captions; 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. Uploading a Final Thesis that is under or over the word count without approval may affect the final grade (see Final Thesis Rubric, criterion 7 'effective communication').

Grading

The supervisor and reader will grade and provide substantive written feedback on the Final Thesis on Datanose. We advise supervisors and readers to make sure that qualitative comments, rubric points and final grades align to avoid any substantial or perceived differences between the qualitative comments and the numeric grades. Furthermore, although it could be helpful for students to receive comments regarding continuing and extending the research, the feedback should be mostly focused on analyzing the student's current work.

4.5 Oral Evaluation/Presentation and Academic Competency

In the final weeks of the Capstone process, the supervisor and the student should arrange an oral evaluation, which 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. As a part of Oral Evaluation & Academic Competency assignment, the supervisor also assesses the student's academic competency skills throughout the Capstone process, such as academic integrity (e.g. transparent about use of AI), academic development/growth, project management, lab skills, work habits, and the three reflection reports that the student submitted with the Research Proposal, Writing Update and Final Thesis. Please note that we do recommend formally assessing the reflection reports when they are submitted as part of the Research Proposal, Writing Update and Final Thesis, but they can be discussed again during the final oral evaluation.

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 (please note that this discussion/conversation should take place *after* the final thesis has been submitted);
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

The timing of the Oral Evaluation is between the student and supervisor. The window of time when it should be held is any time 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 and academic competency on Datanose.

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)
- Final Thesis, graded by Supervisor (35%)
- Final Thesis, graded by Reader (35%)
- Oral Evaluation & Academic Competency, graded by Supervisor (15%)

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 these 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, the final Capstone grade will be calculated on Datanose. 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 1.5 points or in case one assessor gives the Final Thesis a non-passing grade, the Capstone Coordinator will ask the relevant Head of Studies to mediate and write 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 between the two different Capstone grades to less than 1.5 points 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 Failed Final Theses and the Capstone Retry

A student will receive a non-passing Capstone grade if either the Final Thesis is submitted after the deadline or if the Final Thesis receives a cumulative non-passing grade after it is assessed by both the supervisor and reader. These students must then 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 failure by revising the Final Thesis. The notification email will include feedback from the assessors that should clarify for the student why the Final Thesis has been deemed as non-passing. (A student handing in a late Final Thesis would not receive this feedback). The student will then attempt to incorporate as much feedback as possible within the ten-day period. Once the period is over, the student will hand in the revised Final Thesis, which will be assessed using the same criteria as before. That said, the student should not assume revision of the Final Thesis automatically leads to a passing grade. The original comments from the assessors should not be seen as a checklist; the revised Final Thesis can still be assessed

as non-passing.

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) since Capstone failures can only be remedied once a semester. 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 (via auc.nl/servicedesk) at least two weeks before the final deadline, except in cases of force majeure. Extension requests will be evaluated by the Capstone Coordinator, who has been mandated by the Board of Examiners to make decisions about extension requests. Extension requests should be properly motivated and include documentation when necessary, including proof that both the supervisor and reader approve of the extension request (screenshots of emails would suffice). Students who want to appeal a denied extension request can submit a request to the Board of Examiners within six weeks of receiving a denied extension request.

5.2.4 Plagiarism and Fraud

The supervisor and reader should perform plagiarism checks on all submitted files. Suspected plagiarism and fraud will be handled according to the regulations governing these topics (AS&P, Appendix 2). Note that drawing from/elaborating on materials from a student's own work in Advanced Research Writing while working on the Capstone project does not count as self-plagiarism if clear references and/or citations are made (i.e. if a Capstone student recycles substantial parts of work produced in ARW and clearly indicates when and where they're doing so, for instance by an explanatory footnote, it will be considered permissible use of earlier work). Of course, a student should consult their supervisor first if they wish to elaborate on their work from ARW; this conversation would likely happen during the initial meeting between student and supervisor. Additionally, the student may draw from and reuse material from their capstone Research Proposal when writing the Final Thesis, but they should discuss this matter first with their supervisor as well. No citations would be necessary in this situation.

Students and supervisors should be aware that fraud includes making "use of Artificial Intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT and others) without explicit permission in order to generate text or other materials that will be assessed as your own" (AS&P, Appendix 2).

6. Grading Rubrics

Research Proposal Rubric

Intended learning outcome	1 - 5.5 - Insufficient (I)	5.5 - 7.2 - Sufficient (S)	7.3 - 8.5 - Good (G)	>8.6 Very Good/Excellent (E)	Relative Weight (should add up to 100%)
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.	To be determined by supervisor
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.	To be determined by supervisor
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	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.	To be determined by supervisor

	question/thesis. Ethical requirements not met.				
4. Organization and structure	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). Disjointed, incomplete or incoherent; required sections are missing or inadequately developed; paragraphs are insufficiently unified, coherent, and well-developed.	Document is complete and structure is generally coherent, if disjointed or limited in places; paragraphs are often not fully unified, coherent, and well-developed.	Goes beyond the criteria under (S). Document proceeds coherently through all required sections; the middle part of the paper is divided into effective paragraphs that are unified, coherent, and well-developed.	Goes beyond the criteria under (G). Cogently structured, with chapters and/or sections contributing to cohesive and compelling narrative; the middle part of the paper is divided into effective paragraphs that are consistently unified, coherent, and well-developed.	To be determined by supervisor
5. Effective written communication: language, style and lay-out	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). Writing is not sufficiently clear, concise or engaged; sentences limited in complexity and variety. 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. Word count is exceeded without necessity or approval.	Writing and flow of information is generally clear and understandable. Adheres to correct spelling and grammar, formatting and style, but with errors.	Meets the criteria under (S); Evidence of a (developing) scholarly voice and conveys the academic content in a convincing way. Adheres to disciplinary conventions in terms of format and style, with a few errors; Limited grammar and spelling errors.	In addition to the criteria under (G), compellingly engages scholarly audience, while being clear and accessible to various communities of practice. Fully adheres to disciplinary conventions in terms of format and style: Very few, if any, grammar and spelling errors.	10%

Final Thesis Rubric

Supervisors and readers must work with the rubric to determine the final grade and the qualitative feedback provided (e.g. in-text comments or feedback) must explicitly reference the criteria as outlined in this rubric. This practice contributes to grading transparency and consistency. The motivation for the overall grade should be included in the corresponding section of the Final Thesis form on Datanose. The recommended word count for the final motivation is between 300-600 words.

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

Intended learning outcome¹	0-5.5 - insufficient (I)	5.5-7.2 - sufficient (S)	7.3-8.5 - good (G)	8.6-10 very good/excellent (E)	Relative weight (should add up to 100%)
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.	To be determined by assessor
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.	To be determined by assessor

¹ 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.	To be determined by assessor
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 sufficient 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.	To be determined by assessor

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	
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	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; paragraphs are insufficiently unified, coherent, and well-developed.	Document is complete and structure is generally coherent, if disjointed or limited in places; paragraphs are often not fully unified, coherent, and well-developed.	Goes beyond the criteria under (S). Document proceeds coherently through all required sections; the middle part of the paper is divided into effective paragraphs that are unified, coherent, and well-developed.	Goes beyond the criteria under (G). Cogently structured, with chapters and/or sections contributing to cohesive and compelling narrative; the middle part of the paper is divided into effective paragraphs that are consistently unified, coherent, and well-developed.	To be determined by supervisor
7. Effective written communication: language, style and layout	Does not meet the minimal requirements described under (S). Writing is not sufficiently clear, concise or engaged; sentences limited in complexity and variety. Does not adhere to AUC's expectations in terms of formatting and style, with missing citations or bibliography; Notable presence of grammar	Writing and flow of information is generally clear and understandable. Adheres to correct spelling and grammar, formatting and style, but with errors.	Meets the criteria under (S); Evidence of a (developing) scholarly voice and conveys the academic content in a convincing way. Adheres to disciplinary conventions in terms of format and style, with a few errors; Limited grammar and spelling errors.	In addition to the criteria under (G), compellingly engages scholarly audience, while being clear and accessible to various communities of practice. Fully adheres to disciplinary conventions in terms of format and style: Very few, if any, grammar and spelling errors.	10%

	and spelling errors. Word count is exceeded without necessity or approval.				
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Oral Evaluation & Academic Competencies Rubric

Criteria	0-5.5 - insufficient (I)	5.5-7.2 - sufficient (S)	7.3-8.5 - good (G)	8.6-10 very good/excellent (E)
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.)
General 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>

lab skills, work habits, etc.)	<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>	<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>	well-organized and carefully documented. In collaborative work, the student was a cooperative and engaged team player who contributed good independent ideas.	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.
Academic Competencies - reflection documents: the student's ability to critically reflect on the research and writing process (in the three reflection documents and during the supervision meetings)	The student's reflections lack depth and fail to demonstrate an ability to critically reflect on the research writing process (e.g. formulating and narrowing down a research question, selection of sources, choosing a methodology, etc.). There is little evidence of learning or growth and the student does not identify areas for personal or academic development. The student fails to identify significant challenges encountered during the process, or the challenges identified are trivial and not well-explained. There is little to no discussion of how feedback was used to improve their work.	The student demonstrates an ability to critically reflect on the research writing process (see examples listed under (I)), but the reflections lack detail or completeness. There is some evidence of learning and growth, and the student identifies a few areas for personal or academic development, but provides limited discussion on how to achieve future improvements or goals. The student identifies some challenges encountered during the process, but explanations may lack depth or significance. The student makes some use of feedback in their reflection, but the discussion of its impact on their work is limited.	The student demonstrates a clear and coherent understanding of the research and writing process (see examples listed under (I)). Reflections are detailed and complete. There is clear evidence of learning and growth. The student identifies several areas for personal or academic development and provides a thoughtful discussion on strategies and plans to achieve future improvements and goals. The student identifies and explains relevant challenges encountered during the process, providing meaningful context and insights. The student effectively incorporates feedback into their reflection, discussing how it was used to improve their work and demonstrating responsiveness to suggestions.	The student demonstrates an exceptional understanding of the research and writing process (see examples listed under (I)). Reflections are comprehensive, insightful, and cover all aspects in depth. There is strong evidence of significant learning and growth. The student identifies numerous and specific areas for personal and academic development. They provide a comprehensive and actionable plan, including detailed strategies and goals for future improvements, demonstrating a strong commitment to ongoing growth and learning. The student identifies and thoroughly explains a wide range of challenges encountered during the process, offering deep insights into their impact. The student thoughtfully and systematically incorporates feedback into their reflection, demonstrating a high level of

				responsiveness and an ability to use feedback constructively to enhance their work.
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Appendix – Policy on using GenAI in Academic Writing Skills and Advanced Research Writing

The course Advanced Research Writing aims to teach advanced academic writing skills to the (academic) writers of the future. As teachers, we have no doubt that the writers of the future will do their writing supported by AI technology. Therefore, we also believe that today’s students need to learn and practice using AI technology critically and responsibly in their writing.

Generative AI technology and the advantages, disadvantages and risks of using AI tools like ChatGPT will be topics for discussion in this course. Moreover, students are permitted to use generative AI technology in working on their writing projects for this course, provided they adhere to certain rules and guidelines, as outlined in this document and to be discussed further in class.

Rules & Guidelines

1. Students may use generative AI technology to support their writing, in ways similar to how internet search engines, grammar and spell checkers, and (online) dictionaries and thesauruses are used.
2. Students may use generative AI as a source of information and to generate content, as long as they use the tool as an assistant, not an author. Instructions on how to do this are provided further down this document.
3. If students use generative AI tools, they must provide full transparency about how they use them. Instructions on how to do this are provided further down this document.
4. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the advantages as well as disadvantages and potential risks of using generative AI. These topics will also be discussed in class.
5. Students who make use of generative AI tools in their writing assignments remain fully responsible for the texts they submit.
6. The “Regulations governing fraud and plagiarism” (AS&P, Appendix 2) apply to any assignment submitted in the course, written with the help of generative AI or not.
7. These Rules and Guidelines apply exclusively to the course Advanced Research Writing. In other contexts, such as the Capstone, students should contact their teacher or supervisor for permission and guidelines on the use of generative AI tools.

How do you use generative AI as an assistant, not an author?

Generative AI can perform and can even take over certain tasks for you, but you should remain in charge of the overall writing and thinking processes at all times. This means you need to use generative AI critically and responsibly. Do not take over information generated by generative AI tools unthinkingly. And do not incorporate generated output into your text immediately and without acknowledgments. In short, be smart, not lazy.

How can you offer complete transparency about your use of generative AI?

When you use generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT as a source of information, you should treat them like any other source of information you use in your academic writing. Thus, when you incorporate information presented to you by a chatbot, you must summarize, paraphrase, and/or quote it, attribute it clearly and provide a correct citation. (The technical details will be discussed more fully in class). Do note, however,

that you should critically evaluate the quality and reliability of the information you have generated, just as you would with other forms and sources of information.

When you use generative AI to brainstorm ideas, to grammar-check, style-check, and/or enhance your writing, to generate content (including outlines, larger sections of text, or bibliographies), or any other uses, you should explain your approach clearly and in sufficient detail. You can do so, for instance, in an explanatory footnote or as part of your methodology section. Additionally, you are required to save and provide full access to your complete chat history for your project. If you use ChatGPT, for example, you can give access by clicking on the "share chat" button and pasting the link in your methodology section or explanatory footnote.

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