

PPL698 CAPSTONE PROJECT PAPER, AND PRESENTATION DESCRIPTION

A culminating assignment (Integrated Ministry Paper, Capstone Project, Thesis or Comprehensive examination) is required for successful completion of a master's degree (MDiv, MA-PPL, MATS, MA-IIS) at VST. A **capstone project** is a multifaceted assignment that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for MA-PPL students.

WHY: The Capstone Project is an opportunity for students to complete their MA-PPL degree by addressing a practical, real world leadership challenge or opportunity using the skills and knowledge they have gained throughout their program of study. A successful culminating assignment demonstrates the student's capacity to integrate the academic, practical, and spiritual disciplines under-girding a vocation in public and pastoral leadership. It helps them to negotiate successfully the transition to the next stage of their career, whether to the workplace or further study.

WHAT: The Capstone Project culminates in a 15 page paper (4500 words exclusive of notes and bibliography) and presentation. The written report should include the outcomes of the student's experience in addressing the challenge or opportunity identified in the proposal. Along with the Capstone Project report, students also submit any product that resulted from the project, i.e., PowerPoint slides, educational resource, video capture of an event, etc. This presentation will offer the panel audience a glimpse of the student's leadership by engaging the panel (example, World café or open space, etc.) or creatively sharing with the panel a particular aspect of the student's overall project; it is NOT a repetition or recitation of the full paper.

If a student is enrolled in Studio I & II concurrently with the capstone project, the student must make clear how the capstone builds on but goes beyond the requirements of the Studio.

Through the project and presentation, the student will demonstrate capacity to identify a leadership opportunity and to:

- Plan and execute a project
- Assess outcomes
- Communicate effectively
- Manage work in a team
- Reflect critically on self as leader
- Integrate and synthesize prior learning
- Demonstrate capacity as public and/or practical theologian to draw on the academic, practical and spiritual disciplines as covered in the VST curriculum in a community context

HOW:

1) A proposal (750 words) is due to the PPL Committee no later than the 10th week of the student's penultimate term in the degree program. The proposal will outline:

- A. The context in which the leadership challenge or opportunity is situated
- B. A description and analysis of the leadership challenge or opportunity
- C. The intended project's
 - o Aims
 - o Time frame
 - o Delivery
 - o Intended outcomes
 - o Assessment process
- D. The competencies for leadership which the student intends to demonstrate
- E. A completed proposal for research with human subjects (interviews, questionnaires, etc.), if necessary
- E. An outline and date for the presenting the project
- F. Bibliography

2) Students whose proposals have been approved register for PPL698 (Culminating Project – 0.0 credits) and choose a date on the culminating project calendar.

3) The capstone project will be evaluated by a three-member team consisting of: one PT faculty member, a second faculty member (normally also PT) or DDF assigned by the Faculty Association, and one practitioner chosen by the student from a field associated with the student's project. Students are required to assemble an appropriate audience of minimally three additional people with suitable connection to/interest in the project (practitioners, students, faculty, members of public).

4) The capstone project paper is submitted **ONE WEEK PRIOR to the presentation date** to each of the three members of their panel. A copy of the evaluation form must be sent with the paper.

5) The paper must include a bibliography of sources and follow the guidelines for academic papers (MLA, Turabian, Chicago). Papers must be carefully edited and will not be APPROVED until all copy-edit errors and omissions are corrected.

6) On the assigned date, the student offers a 1hr presentation followed by 15 minutes of discussion. At that time, the participants/audience are dismissed while the evaluators make and share their assessment (either APPROVED, INCOMPLETE, or NOT APPROVED) of both the paper and the presentation based on the published evaluation criteria (see competencies below).

7) Students have one opportunity, working with a faculty advisor, to re-work as assigned by the evaluation team either or both the paper and presentation. The student will need to register and pay the maintenance fee for another semester if the deadline for successful completion of coursework for graduation has passed prior to successful completion of the culminating project.

Capstone Project competencies:

The project and presentation will show one's capacity as a public theologian by demonstrating:

- development of leadership competencies
 - ability to implement the practical skills of project development including contextual analysis, theological
 - knowledge of biblical themes and their contexts, articulation of one's own hermeneutic, and ability to integrate biblical themes [and/or wisdom from other religions and spiritualities] and theology with practice of leadership
 - knowledge of central themes of one's faith and ability to engage in theological reflection on those themes as they relate to major challenges facing contemporary religious communities and society and the practice of ministry and leadership (nb: Christology)
 - familiarity with one's denominational or faith tradition, including an historical analysis of the tradition as it relates to major challenges facing contemporary religious communities and society and the practice of ministry and leadership
 - understanding of the intersection of religious faiths and contemporary culture, and how this intersection might impact one's contribution to public and pastoral leadership
 - the way in which one's spiritual life bears on one's leadership
 - compliance with the VST policy on research with human subjects
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