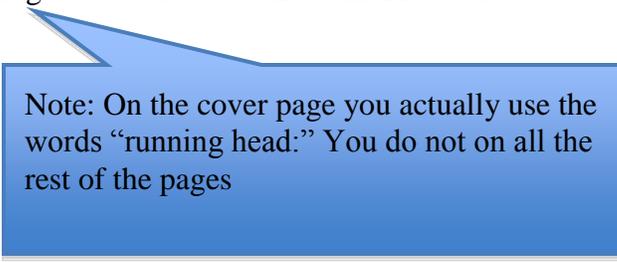Note: On the cover page you actually use the words "running head:" You do not on all the rest of the pages

Note page number position

The Capstone Guidebook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Capstone Design and Writing

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Note, running head

See Ch 3 for required format for headings. APA has a required format to follow. Do not accept Word formatting without reviewing even if it says it is APA.

Chapter 1: Getting Started

For this class you will be conducting a research study or completing a project

which demonstrates the skills and knowledge you have obtained in your field. The

completed study/project will not only demonstrate depth of knowledge and the ability to apply

that knowledge, but it may also allow opportunities to show prospective employers how your

acquired skills might be utilized in the workplace. This is your opportunity to showcase your

abilities. Therefore, you will want to give careful thought to your goals for the research you are

conducting or the project you will complete and how you will accomplish those goals. This

chapter is intended to help you consider what needs to happen before this course is finished and

to give you some guidance in selecting an appropriate research study or project.

An Overview of What Needs to be Accomplished

Okay, so the basic goal is to do some research or complete a project and write a paper

about it. You have probably done a short version of this at some point in time during your

college career or in the workplace. For this class, however, it is not a short version and it cannot

be put together at the last minute. Start today. Continue on a regular schedule. Devote enough

time to selecting a topic that will allow you to demonstrate your talents and abilities. On the

other hand don't spend so much time selecting a topic that you sacrifice the time you need to

complete the work. Plan how you will accomplish your goals. Methodology matters. Once the

work on the research/project is done, don't be surprised by the fact that you are far from being

finished. Presentation is crucial. All the knowledge in the world is worth little if you can't share

what you have discovered. You will need time to develop tables and figures. You will need

time to write and edit and continue to write and edit until the final work is presented in a clear,

understandable, and organized format that follows APA current standards and the five-chapter

approach presented in this manual. A lot of work? Definitely! Remember, however, the final result reflects your abilities and the image you want to present to those around you—one of whom may be a future employer.

Selecting a Topic

The first step then is to select a topic. A list of possible approaches is given below. You may have additional ideas. You can talk with your instructor about those possibilities. Read through the suggestions below and then brainstorm ideas. Remember, there will be a lot of time spent on this project before the semester is finished; one of the keys to making the course satisfying is to select a topic that interests you. Even better if it not just interests you, but fascinates you.

Generating ideas for a research topic or a project. There are various types of research studies and projects that may be completed. A discussion of some of the types of research methodology is given in later sections, if you need help in that area. One approach for generating ideas might be to:

1. Read through possible approaches

2. Review prior textbooks, websites, magazine articles, etc. to compile a list of questions or topics that are of particular interest to you

3. Consider workplace applications or situations that could benefit from additional research or application projects

4. Consider what additional information you would like to know about topics of interest

5. Review the questions in the subsection entitled "Is it feasible"

6. If there are several ideas from which to choose, utilize the ranking of topics

table in the PowerPoint presentation from week one.

Once you have an idea in mind for your research study/project, complete the Capstone Project

Proposal Form and submit to your instructor to obtain permission to proceed.

Types of research studies. In the business world, research often relates to real-life

business problems and solutions. Most likely, your research/project will relate to a topic that

studies business problems, finds solutions for business problems, compares solutions for

business problems, applies your knowledge to develop a solution to a business problem, etc. In

the process you must do more than just report on what others have already discovered; to do this

would be no more than a literature review similar to what will be discussed later in relation to

chapter 2 of your capstone. You should be adding new discoveries or analyzing, comparing and

contrasting what you have found, or discovering solutions to problems as part of your

study/project. Types of studies in the business world frequently include descriptive studies,

relational studies, causal studies, exploratory studies, or those seeking to support or disprove a

hypothesis.

Descriptive studies. A descriptive study describes or reports on what is going on. It

answers questions such as who, what, and how. For instance, you may want to explore what

software solutions are available to solve a particular problem. Your study would describe

various solutions that are possible. If you choose this type of a study, note that you cannot just

collect information from sales people and call it a scientific study. You may gather sales

information as part of your literature review. You would, however, need to take this further to

constitute a legitimate study. You might do this by testing the products yourself and comparing,

surveying others who have used the product, etc. Note, however, if you conduct any surveys or

questionnaires as part of your research, be certain that you meet all university guidelines. Prior

to sending anything out, you must obtain instructor (and committee for graduate students)

approval.

       Relational studies. A relational study looks at relationships between variables. In the

previous example, after gathering information on various products, it might be possible to

compare the products to decide which one could best solve a specific business problem that you

are examining in your study. This would extend the descriptive study so that it could also be

referred to as a relational study.

       Causal studies. A causal study is designed to determine whether one or more variables

can cause or affect an outcome. For instance, a particular piece of software may cause specific

results in specific situations. It may be possible to design a study in which you install the

software and test to see if it actually works as stated and if it does appear that there is a cause and

effect relationship.

       Exploratory studies. An exploratory study would generally be used for fairly new topics

of study. One of the goals in this case would be to gather as much information as possible about

a topic. This type of study would most likely include analysis and evaluation of the information

gathered in comparison to some established standard. It would also probably include a

discussion of what additional information needs to be verified or developed in order to add to

knowledge in the field and usability of the information. Again, do not stop with just gathering

information. That would be no more than a literature review.

       Hypothesis. A hypothesis study tests a prediction. This is the type of study that many

think about when the word *research* is mentioned. In other words, a prediction is made and then

research work is done that will allow the researcher to determine if test results show the

hypothesis to be true or false.

Is it feasible. Once you have tentatively selected an idea, it is important to consider

whether it will work for purposes of this class. Consider some of the following questions.

1. Does this study have a high value of interest and/or will it contribute substantially to

     professional development?

2. Is the study possible within the time frame of this course?

3. Is the study possible logistically and geographically?

4. If a data base is necessary, is it easily available?

5. If a sample is necessary, how will it be selected?

6. If questionnaires or surveys are being conducted, is enough time available to complete

    the process. Note: this can be very time consuming. In some cases, the university may

    need to approve the survey ahead of time; this can add up to an extra month of time

    before you can even send your survey out.

7. If questionnaires or surveys are being conducted, will they need to be validated? Also,

     consider whether or not you have access to enough people to conduct the survey.

8. Is this project/study financially possible? It is possible to have the university provide

     some resources but there is no guarantee. It will be your responsibility to obtain

     everything necessary for the study.

Completing the Topic Selection Process

If you have gone through the above process and are satisfied with the selection of a topic

and the answers to the feasibility questions, it is time to obtain approval to proceed. To do this,

the Capstone Project Proposal Form should be completed. Answer the questions on the form and

submit to your instructor for approval by the due date specified in the classroom. You should

have this form completed and submitted for approval within one week of the first on-ground

class session.

Progress Towards Your Goal

Get in the habit of regular communication with your instructor.

- Weekly updates are required

- When you think you are close to getting a chapter done:

    - Have someone else read it that has a copy of this manual

    - Save it to a different disk/drive or upload it to online storage for safety OFTEN!

    - Send it to the instructor for review and comments by the required due date. Late submissions are subject to point reduction. Early submission is encouraged but do not submit early unless you have a specific question(s) or you are satisfied that it is ready for review. DO NOT wait until the entire paper is done! Please note the emphasis of this point.

    - PLEASE NOTE, sending it to me via email for early review does not qualify as being submitted to the assignment section in Blackboard. Only those submissions in Blackboard will be graded.

- No Paper is finished until the instructor specifically states that it is done.

    - Do not confuse comments of it coming along nicely, looking good, etc. with it being finished.

    - I am not trying to influence your topic, my goal is to help you make your paper as high a quality as I possibly can. Think of my job as more of the publisher or editor than just the instructor.

Chapter 2: The Five-Chapter Approach to the Capstone

Regardless of the topic or methodology, the capstone paper should follow the five-chapter approach described in this chapter of the guidebook**.** Following this approach should help to organize the project. In addition, it is required for the actual write-up of the project. The five chapters are:

1. Introduction

2. Literature review

3. Methodology

4. Results

5. Analysis and suggestions for further study

A brief discussion of each of the chapters follows.

Chapter 1 Design

Chapter 1 tells the reader what your study/project is about and why it is important. It also provides general information about the study/project which the reader might need to know. It should include an introduction, background specific to the problem, a statement of the problem, rationale, research questions, nature and importance of the study, definition of terms, and assumptions and limitations. If a project has been selected, the idea would be the same but the subsections might be more like, introduction, background specific to the project, statement of the situation/problem that resulted in the project, rationale for choosing the project as a solution, questions/concerns expected to be addressed by the project, importance of the project, definition of terms, and assumptions and limitations. In the following subsections, wording will be used that refers to a study, but the same information can be applied to the similar section of a project.

Introduction. The introduction may range from a paragraph or two to possibly one page in length. Its purpose is to state the general nature of the problem. Note that this is the general nature and not the problem itself. It should be brief and it is intended to capture the attention of the reader. A good introduction should make the reader want to read more.

Background. This subsection should also be brief. It provides some information regarding the general context of the topic. As an example, if computer security over inventory records for a sporting goods business is a problem for small companies and you will be studying solutions that might solve the problem, this section might briefly discuss why computer security over inventory records for a small sporting goods business is a problem.

Statement of the problem. This part could be considered the conclusion to a three-part introduction. This, again, is very brief. One or two paragraphs may be sufficient for the statement of the problem. The section should basically pull from the ideas in the two proceeding sections and then end with something like, "Therefore, the problem or topic addressed in this study is…" In the preceding example, it might say:

> Evidence has shown that inventory control is important for a small business. It has also shown that inventory control can be particularly difficult for a small sporting goods business. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is inventory control for small businesses with a large volume of inventory.

Purpose of the study. This section presents the purpose for the study. It should include the specific objectives of the study. The purpose or objectives must specifically relate to the problem just identified. Generally, a few sentences would be sufficient. If the sporting goods store example is continued, the following might be an example of what to include in this section. The purpose of this study is to examine software options

for recording inventory that are available to small businesses in the sporting goods

industry. The objective of this study will be to compare features for software options that

are available in order to help business owners make a decision regarding software

purchases.

Rationale. The rationale for a study is intended to provide a conceptual or theoretical

basis for the study. This section should tie together the problem that has been identified, the

purpose, or goal, of the study, and should identify how you intend to use the results to

accomplish your goals. In essence, this is a theory section. It allows the researcher to show how

the results of this study can help to solve the problem. This may be accomplished by analyzing

data gathered in the study, interpreting trends, etc. For example, in our sporting goods store

example, the point may be made that business owners are aware of the need but they are unsure

of how to solve the problem. The rationale for the study would then be that by researching

options and analyzing and comparing results information can be provided business owners that

will allow effective decisions to be made.

Research questions. All the previous information has been provided to set the stage for

identifying and listing the specific research questions/objectives for the study. There may be

only one question or there might be two or three. Please note that graduate students are required

to have 2 or more (but not more than 4) questions. Undergraduate students are encouraged to

have no more than 1 research question or at the most 2 questions. This will allow more time to

learn the process involved in this type of research and paper design. BE AWARE that each

research question added will increase time requirements to complete the course. Again, using

the sporting goods store as an example, research questions might be:

1. Identify software that can be used by small businesses to record large volumes of inventory.

2. Identify users of that software and survey them regarding effectiveness of this feature of the software.

3. Develop comparisons of software included in the study that will compare cost, capabilities, system requirements, and comments from users regarding good and bad features of the software.

Nature of the study. In this section, state the method of study that will be used. Will you accomplish your objectives and answer your research questions by completing a project or by conducting a study? If a study is being conducted, will it be descriptive, relational, causal, exploratory, or predictive?

Significance of the study. This might be looked at from at least two perspectives. One perspective would be personal significance. The other would be professional or research significance.   From a personal perspective consider personal interest in the topic, what personal satisfaction might be gained, what career advancement might be possible. From a professional perspective consider what information might be added to the field of study, who else might find this information useful, what other uses might be made of this study.

Definition of terms. Technical words used in the paper that are used in a specialized sense should be included in the definitions section. List each term separately and define it. Include citations if you are quoting or paraphrasing someone's definition of a term. Do not include terms that are not used in your paper.

Assumptions and limitations. This is the final section of chapter one. List all assumptions together. Follow this by a list of all limitations. Using the sporting goods store

example again, assumptions might be that cost of the software is not a limiting factor and that

networking capability is required. A limitation might be that no users who were willing to be

interviewed could be located for a specific software. Don't worry if you do not get this section

completed before moving on to the next chapter. As you go through your research, frequently

more assumptions and limitations become evident. These can be added as you conduct your

research and complete your findings.

Chapter 2 Design

Chapter 2 includes the literature review or the results of your secondary research. Before

conducting your own project/study, you need to thoroughly understand your field and what has

already been attempted and accomplished by others. This chapter is intended to review and

synthesize the information you have found in the process of researching what others have already

accomplished. It may provide the foundation for building knowledge, provide a conceptual

framework for the study, provide support for the methodology you choose, and/or provide

support for possible interpretations of the results found in your study.

This chapter should not read like a series of book reports. Conduct your literature

review. Include books and scholarly articles but be sure the information is current. Websites

may be included if you can establish the credibility of the site. Each significant point in your

research question(s) and problem statement should be covered. Anything else, regardless of how

interesting it might be, should not be included. As you gather your information, categorize it by

subject or theme. Use these themes to develop the chapter. Organize the themes in an

appropriate way to build the chapter from beginning to end in a way that lends itself to providing

the background necessary to understand the last three chapters of your capstone. Content of this

chapter is important of course, but organization and clarity are the keys to whether or not the

reader can determine that there actually is valuable content that contributes to the research

process.

This chapter may vary in size depending on the amount of information available. It is

typically one of the longer chapters in your capstone paper and may well be between five and

thirty pages in length. This is a foundational chapter. Each and every research question (and any

possible sub-questions) must be supported by a background study related directly to those

questions. Typically, this is done by having a level 2 or level 3 heading to identify background

information relating each of those specific research questions.

Chapter 3 Design

This chapter details the method used to conduct your study. Be specific – almost like a

recipe from a cook book. After reviewing this section, the reader should be able to conduct the

exact same research with no further information than what you provide here. Take the reader

through the process you went through, step-by-step. NOTE, if there is more than one research

question, then each question must be addressed individually even if the method for research is

identical.

Description of methodology. Describe the type of study you are conducting. Include a

defense of your method. For instance, if you have chosen to do a relational study because you

feel it is the best way to compare the options available for solving a particular problem, state this

along with any other support you have for the method chosen.

Design of the study. This is where you should state exactly how your study was set up.

Examples of information that might be included follow. If a sample was used, how was it

selected? If a survey was conducted, how were participants selected and what questions were

asked? You may include some of this information in an Appendix and just refer to it in the

chapter; mechanics of presentation will be discussed in a later chapter. What other information was gathered and how was that accomplished? What procedures were used to establish validity or credibility? If software was installed as part of your study, what steps were taken and what options were chosen during the installation process?

Data analysis. Results of the study are reported in Chapter 4. In Chapter 3, however, include a discussion of how and when the data will be analyzed and how it is expected that the data analysis will allow you to answer the research questions. Also include in Chapter 3 how long any sample data from surveys or other sources will be kept and where they will be kept. For example, you could say something like "all survey information was collected anonymously and the results of the surveys will be kept with the author for a period of at least one year."

Chapter 4 Design

Chapter 4 presents the results of your study/project. Depending on the type of research conducted this may be a relatively long chapter. In this chapter tables and/or figures must be used to assist in presenting results. Information specific to presenting data in tables and figures will be discussed in the next chapter. Again, if there is more than one research question, each question must be identified in order by using a level 2 heading.

Chapter 5 Design

Chapter 5 includes a summary of your findings and a discussion of the conclusions drawn from your study/project. An analysis of the data and an analysis of the significance of the data related to each research question should be included as part of this discussion. This chapter does not need to be long. It is a very important part of your paper, however, and it should be written in a way that demonstrates your ability to think critically and to apply what you have learned to solve business-related problems. Additionally, include suggestions for further study. You may

gain ideas for further study based on questions that came up during your project, topics that you

did not have time to pursue but are related, answers that came up that you were not expecting,

etc.

Chapter 3: Organizing the Presentation of Your Study/Project

The five-chapter model described in the previous chapter of this guidebook should be used as you think about your study/project. It will help you to organize your thought process as you develop your capstone study/project. The five-chapter approach not only should, but must be used in your written presentation. The paper must also follow APA guidelines. A summary of some APA guidelines along with websites that contain further information and examples is included in Appendix A. This chapter will cover some specifics of APA formatting that frequently cause problems.

APA Headings

APA format uses a unique system referred to as levels of headings for organizing sections of a paper. This may seem difficult at first but it does help to separate and organize your paper. It may help to think of headings as something like a topical outline. APA headings are designed in a way that helps the reader to quickly see the organization from a brief visual inspection of the paper. This guide has been following APA format to give you an example of how headings are used. You may have noticed that chapters have been divided with a heading that is centered and bolded and uses both upper and lower case letters with major words starting with a capital letter (also known as title case). This type of a heading is called a level 1 heading in APA and it indicates that this is a main division of the paper. In our five-chapter approach it will be used for chapter headings. The next level of heading or sub-division that would fall underneath a level 1 heading is a level 2 heading. It is typed flush left, bolded, and presented in title case. To subdivide information within a level 2 heading, use a level 3 heading, etc. Further description of the format for each level of heading is in the Appendix A of this guidebook includes examples of levels one, two, three, and four. Note that APA format does change from time to time and that

instructions for how to do levels of headings have changed so if you look at papers prepared at other times, you may see different styles. For purposes of this class, APA 6th edition is being followed except where you are instructed by the instructor. If there is confusion, check with your instructor. At all times, if there is a difference, instructor guidelines and requirements supersede APA guidelines. See appendix C for template.

Tables and Figures

The presentation of a large amount of data is frequently easier, both for the researcher and the viewer, if tables and figures are used. Tables typically display numerical data in columns and rows. The general rule is that if there are less than two columns and two rows do not use a table, instead include the information in the narrative. Tables should not duplicate what is written in the narrative, but rather present new information. Refer to the table in the narrative along with a brief discussion of the main points you wish the reader to gain from the table, but don't attempt to explain every detail of the table. It should be possible to interpret a table without the text.

APA has specific rules for how to include tables in your paper. First, tables are numbered consecutively throughout the paper. If you have tables in one chapter and then have additional tables in a new chapter do not start numbering over again. Tables also require a heading. This heading is typed flush left and includes the table number. Capitalize the word *table* followed by an Arabic number (Table 1, Table 2, etc). The number given to the table is determined by the order in which the table is referred to in the text. Do not bold or italicize the word *table*. Each table should have a unique title that is written below the table number. Titles should be brief yet descriptive and each major word is capitalized. Also in tables, the title is italicized (not the word *table*, only the description line). The description line is not followed by a period.

An example of a correctly formatted table follows. This example was taken from another source in order to also illustrate how to cite a table or figure if you did not develop it on your own.

Table 1

Sample Table Describing Fake Data

Note table name, position and style. See preceding paragraph for more details.

	Variable A		Variable B	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Men (*n* = 100)	32.61	8.95	17.08	5.25
Women (*n* = 80)	33.02	9.17	16.91	5.13

Note. These data were totally made up. They are just presented to give you an idea about how to present information in a table.

Source: Kahn, J. (n.d.). *Sample apa paper*.

If a table or figure is cited, do not forget to include the full reference on the reference page. For instance, in the above example, the reference would be: Kahn, J. (n.d.). *Sample apa paper*. Retrieved from http://my.ilstu.edu/~jhkahn/APAsample.pdf.

Note that the 6th edition for APA allows either single-spacing or double-spacing for tables. Readability is the primary consideration. If you have a great deal of information to include in a table, you may wish to use single-spacing. Consistency is required. If the table starts single-spaced, it must be that way throughout the table. In the above example, single-spacing would have started with Table 1 and ended after the source information line. Put lines in a table only when they are necessary for clarity. Horizontal lines are permissible; vertical lines are not. For purposes of this class, you may choose to include tables and figures in a box or leave them

without surrounding lines. Also, you may see some references to the fact that APA requires

tables to start at the top of a page and prefers that they be placed after the references. This

relates to submitting to some journals for publication. For purposes of this class, you may

include tables and figures within the narrative of your paper.

Figures include graphs, pictures, and charts. Basically they include anything that doesn't

qualify as a table. Figures also must be formatted specifically for APA. The rules work the same

way for numbering figures as they do for tables. In other words, number them consecutively,

Figure 1, Figure 2, etc. Unfortunately, the requirements for labeling figures are different than

those for tables. The caption for a figure is shown below the figure rather than above as it was

with tables. Type Figure 1 (or whatever number you are on) flush left below the figure. Italicize

that part of the caption and follow it with a period. On the same line include a brief descriptive

phrase followed by a period. The name/description following the figure number is not italicized.

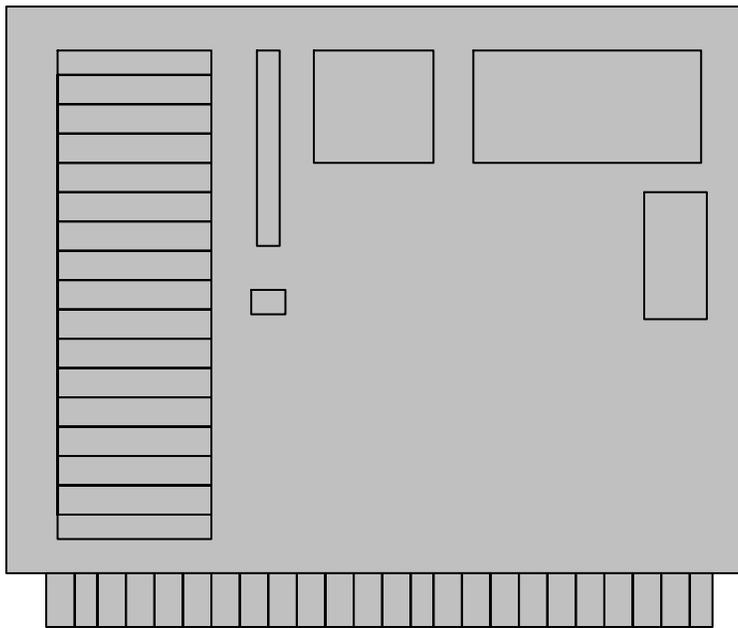An example of a figure with a properly formatted caption follows.

Figure 1. Mainframe.

Note position, italics and periods. This is formatted different than a TABLE.

Abstract

        The abstract is used by many readers to decide if they will read an entire article or not.

Concisely summarize highlights from your paper in the abstract. The word limit is between 150

and 250 words. For purposes of this class 250 words will be allowed; however, if you are

writing for publication, some journals will only allow 150 words. The abstract should be in

block format; in other words, it does not start with an indent as paragraphs within this paper do.

Do not use abbreviations in the abstract. A couple other peculiarities of abstracts are that the

rules for headings and numbers do not follow normal APA rules. The word *abstract* on the

separate abstract page is centered and starts with a capital, but it is not bolded. Also all numbers

on an abstract page except those that begin a sentence should be typed as a digit rather than

written out.

Citations and References

There are many sources for information about APA standards for citing and referencing.

Links to several websites giving help and examples on such topics as APA, block quotes,

citations and references and other related topics can be found in Appendix B at the end of this

manual. To help in generating the correct citations and references, it is possible to utilize help

from various websites. Some reference sites, provide information that shows how to cite and

reference their site using APA format. There are also resources such as Citation Machine found

at http://citationmachine.net/index2.php?start=&reqstyleid=2&newstyle=2&stylebox=2 Citation

machine will generate citations and references based on the information you input.

There are several cautions that should be observed when a citation generator such as

Citation Machine is used. First, you must select APA format for purposes of this class. Next

you must select the proper source document. In other words, if a book is selected as the source,

but the information actually came from a journal, Citation Machine will generate a citation and

reference based on the information it has. The citation and reference would be incorrect,

however, because the information fed into the system was insufficient. Do not assume that

because a citation generator is used, the result will be correct. Always review the results to be

sure they appear to be correct and compare those results to examples of correctly formatted

information. One last caution, APA 6th edition asks for page numbers in citations for directly

quoted material. Keep this in mind as you are doing your literature review in particular; it may

save you a lot of time when you are putting together the final product.
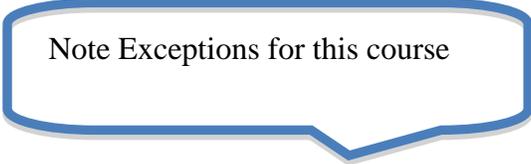
Appendix

Note Exceptions for this course

      If one or more appendices are used in your paper, include them after the reference

page(s). Each appendix should have a separate letter (A, B, C, etc.). Technically, APA format

says to start page numbering over on each appendix. This is not required for purposes of this

course. You may start numbering with page 1 on the cover page and continue through the

appendices. If information in an Appendix includes a document from another source (survey,

questionnaire, etc.), the document may retain its original format; it does not have to be

reformatted to meet APA standards.
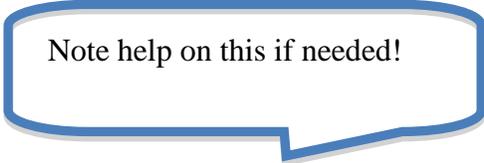
Note help on this if needed!

Formatting the Running Head

      The running head is placed in the header on each page. It often causes frustration for

students because the first page is different from other pages. The title is placed flush left and the

page number is page right, but on the cover page, the title is different. If you are not familiar

with working with headers, check the Help screen. You may also find the following steps helpful

(although different versions of Word may have a slightly different procedure). First set up a

header with the running head you wish to use in your paper and the page number. After this is

done, go to page one of your document, select header again and then choose page setup, layout,

and different first page. This should allow you to add Running head: to the first page only.

Chapter 4: A Few Basics for Writing the Capstone

By now it should be obvious that an enormous amount of work goes into a Capstone paper. Ending this manual with a chapter about writing may seem unnecessary or a little anticlimactic or trivial. Think about the following question, however. After all your work on this project so far, would you want to discourage others from reading about it, or giving you the credit you deserve, because you didn't put your best effort into writing effectively? This chapter is not intended to be a refresher course. It is designed to simply give a few tips and suggestions to help you put your best foot forward when it comes to communication.

Three Basic Writing Principles

When writing a capstone paper, many students feel that the goal is to provide page after page of complicated information that only instructors with a doctorate in the field can decipher. Not true. Content is important. That has already been stressed. Your goal in the paper, however, is to take the information, no matter how complicated, and present it in a clear and understandable way. From a writing standpoint, keep in mind three basic principles of writing good English. These are: clarity, simplicity, and brevity.

Clarity. Clarity basically means that the reader must be able to understand exactly what you are saying. If it is not clear, there is no sense writing a document. Sometimes it may be the content of the material that does not make sense. As you are writing a paper, something may seem perfectly clear to you because you know what thoughts were in your mind at the time and you also know everything that happened with your project. It may not be clear to someone else, however. There are two steps that you might take to help in this situation. First, after writing the first draft, wait a day or two and then reread to see if it still makes sense. A second possibility

would be to have someone else read the paper to see if it makes sense to someone who is unfamiliar with the material.

Writing may also be unclear if there are grammar and spelling mistakes. Always run a spell-checker program before submitting any part of your paper. Also use a grammar-checking program. Although it is possible that either of these programs will indicate an error exists when there really is no error, they are a helpful place to start. Another good source for a review of your written paper would be a classmate or a good friend. If you know someone who would be willing to read your paper and proof it for spelling and/or grammar errors, feel free to ask them to read your paper or a chapter or two of it after you have finished a draft. This chapter of the guidebook also includes a list of common errors made in student papers. A review of this list may help you to spot some errors.

The Ferris State University writing center is also available to help you with writing assignments. The writing center can be very helpful and will be suggested if there appear to be many edits needed of a mechanical nature. Keep in mind, however, that the writing center is very busy near the end of each semester. Start early so that there will be enough time to receive the help you need. Also, allow for the fact that you will probably be asked to submit small sections of your paper at a time. Don't expect that you will be able to take a 100-page paper to the writing center and pick it up edited for you in a day or two. They will work with you, but usually it will be a few pages at a time and you will need to do the edits for yourself. They will not just rewrite your paper for you.

Simplicity. Simple is good. That may not seem right when talking about a capstone paper—the paper that culminates your college experience. It is still, however, a principle of writing good English. This principle is sometimes particularly difficult to put into practice for

those students for whom English is a second language. Some cultures believe that simplicity and education do not go together. Sentences and paragraphs must be complex and complicated in order to make the writer appear intelligent. Language does reflect culture. In the United States it is not necessary to embellish and complicate in order to impress. A simple statement that clearly makes your point is far better than a complicated, unclear statement that is difficult to follow.

Brevity. The third principle is that short is frequently better than long. Short words are often better than long words. Short sentences are often better than long sentences. Short paragraphs are better than long paragraphs, but keep in mind that a paragraph must have more than one sentence to be considered a paragraph. Keeping everything ultra-short may be boring and counterproductive. A blend of long with short, with a slight emphasis on short, may be the best option. One reason for this is that short words, sentences, and paragraphs may be easier for the reader to follow without losing the train of thought. The APA suggests that if a paragraph is longer than one double-spaced page in length, you may risk losing your reader. For further discussion of short versus long, see http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2011/12/the-long-and-the-short-of-it.html.

Common Writing Errors

Important! Pay attention

Following is a list of common writing errors that have been found in student papers. This is not intended to be a complete list. It simply points out a few of areas to watch for as you write your paper.

1. Incomplete sentences. A grammar checker should help identify these.

2. Run-on sentences. Look for these if you have a very long sentence.

3. Colon versus semi-colon. Use a colon (:) if you intend to follow it with a list. Use a semi-colon (;) if it separates two thoughts that are related but each could stand alone as a separate sentence.

4. There or their. A grammar checker should help you with this.

5. Its or it's. A grammar checker should help with this also.

6. No apostrophe for time periods such as 1990s. When referring to a decade or a time period, do not use an apostrophe.

The APA manual also has some specific grammatical guidelines. The APA manual and website give examples of correct usage. There are also several websites that will help identify areas that APA has emphasized. One site that you might find helpful is found at http://thewritedirection.net/drpaper/help/05-07-apastyle.htm. Whenever you are looking for information on the Internet about APA format be sure to check for APA format according to the 6th edition. Also keep in mind that there were several errors made when the first printing of the 6th edition was made available. Those errors were corrected in a second edition. If you have questions as to acceptable format, follow the guidelines given in this guidebook, the template that is available for this class, and information regarding APA formatting according to the 6th edition, 2nd or later printing.

Course Specific Guidelines

Following are a few last reminders/comments to help you in the process of completing your capstone:

1. There are specific requirements as to how any partial papers should be submitted for this course; these requirements relate to naming your files, where to submit, use of Word for in-progress submissions, and requirements to be completed before resubmitting.

     a. File names are to be formatted as follows: last-name-content-date.docx. For

        example, if I am submitting my chapter 1 on January 23, the format of the file

        name will be "Blakemore-ch1-jan-23.docx

     b. Files are to be submitted in doc or docx format only with the exception of the

        final submission, after getting instructor approval will be submitted in .pdf format.

2. Submissions not following these requirements may not be read and/or may lose points.
Do NOT use Google docs to review files for comments from the instructor; there is a
good chance you will not see anything even though comments have been made.

3. You may be requested to have your paper peer reviewed or reviewed by the writing
center or by another professional. If so, this becomes a requirement before completing
your paper.

4. Your capstone paper should include a table of contents and a list of tables and figures. It
may also include copyright information, a dedication, and acknowledgements. You will
not find guidance for how to format these sections in an APA manual. A template that
may help you with formatting those portions of your paper for this course (particularly
the cover page through the abstract) is included in Appendix C.

     By now, if you are reading through this guidebook before you start any work on your
study/project, you may be feeling slightly overwhelmed. If so, remember that although it is good
to read through this publication before you start in order to get an overview, this is also intended
to be a reference manual as you complete your capstone. Refer to it as you go along. Above all,
keep in mind a couple of the statements made early in the guidebook. First, this is your
opportunity to showcase your abilities. Secondly, one of the keys to making the course
satisfying is to select a topic that interests you--even better if it not just interests you, but

fascinates you. One final suggestion: start immediately. Allow yourself enough time to enjoy

the process.

Reference

Kahn, J. (n.d.). *Sample apa paper*. Retrieved from http://my.ilstu.edu/~jhkahn/APAsample.pdf
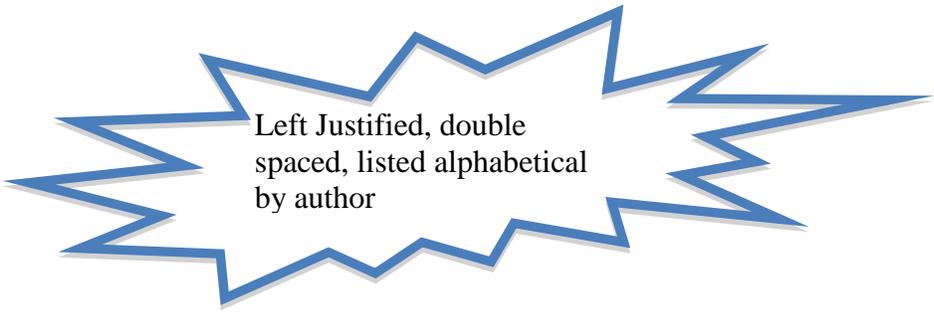
Left Justified, double spaced, listed alphabetical by author

Appendix A

APA Essentials for Capstone Projects

Douglas Blakemore, Ph.D.

Ferris State University

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed., 2010) and the APA Style web site (http://www.apastyle.org/) provide a comprehensive reference guide to writing using APA style, organization, and content. This document contains a summarization of some key elements of APA style. It is intended to provide a common core of elements to be used by students submitting capstone papers in the following courses: ISIN 499 and MISM799

This document is not in itself a model of APA style. It is recommended that you refer to the APA manual or website for more complete information on APA format.

General Document Guidelines

1. Margins: One inch on top, bottom, left and right.

2. Font Size and type: 12-point, Times New Roman

3. Line spacing: Double-space throughout the paper, including the title page, abstract, body of the document, references, appendices, tables, and figures unless otherwise specified in the template for this course. See information in the Guidebook for this course regarding the possibility of single-spacing tables.

4. Alignment: Flush left (creating uneven right margin)

5. Paragraph indentation: 5-7 spaces

6. Page numbers: The page number appears on the right edge of the paper in the top header of every page.

7. Running head: The running head is a short title for the paper. It is limited to 50

characters which includes spaces and punctuation. The running head is part of the

header. Type the running head in the header flush left. The page number should be on

the same line of the header but is entered flush right. On the cover page preface the

running head with the words "Running head:"

8. Order of pages: Title Page, Dedication (optional), Acknowledgements (optional),

Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures, Abstract, Body, References,

Appendices

Abstract

The abstract is a one-paragraph summary of the capstone paper.   Center the word

"Abstract" (no bold, formatting, italics, underlining, or quotation marks). Beginning with the

next line, write a concise summary of the key points of your research. Your abstract should

contain at least your research topic, research questions, methods, results, and conclusions. You

may include a list of keywords for locating your document if you wish. If you choose to do

so, center the text and type *Keywords:* (italicized) and then list your key

Body

Chapter divisions and subdivisions. Each chapter of the capstone paper should begin on

a new page. Subsections of each chapter do not begin on new pages. See the rules for headings

for subdivisions within a chapter.

Headings. Five levels of headings are used in APA in order to organize the paper. You

are not required to use all five levels. If the paper is subdivided, however, you must follow APA

format for all levels of headings that are used. It is generally helpful for the flow and

organization of your paper to use at least three levels of headings. The five levels of headings

are as follows:

	APA HEADINGS
Level	Format
1	On a line by itself, centered, bold, upper and lower case, no punctuation at end **Level 1 Headings**
2	On a line by itself, left-align, bold, upper and lower case, no punctuation at end **Level 2 Headings** Paragraph begins here
3	On the first line of paragraph, indented, bold, lower case, period **Level 3 heading.** Paragraph begins here
4	On the first line of paragraph, indented, bold and italicized, lower case, period ***Level 4 heading.*** Paragraph begins here
5	On the first line of paragraph, indented, italicized but not bolded, lower case, period *Level 5 heading.* Paragraph begins here

For ISIN 499 and MISM799 the Chapter divisions would be a level 1 heading. For

example, the page that starts Chapter 1 would have the words Chapter 1 and any other title you

wish to give it as a level one heading. Subdivisions within Chapter 1 would use Level 2 through 5 headings.

Figures and tables. Tables are typically used to present quantitative data or the results of statistical analyses. The APA uses the term figure to refer to an illustration that is not a table. See the guidebook for this class for further information about the proper formatting of tables and figures.

Citations and References

All source material must be documented in the body of the paper with citations. Citations generally include author name and date. If the material is a direct quote the page or paragraph number is also included in the citation. References include more information than citations and are intended to allow the reader to access the original material. The author/date information in the citation must tie directly to the first part of the reference. No citation should be included in the paper that is not referenced (other than personal communications) and no references should be included unless there is a citation.

Use of a citation generator such as CitationMachine.net is permitted and recommended. Use of aids such as this will allow you to be sure that references and citations link together properly. Unless you are cautious in selecting both the fact that you want APA format and the appropriate source of material (journal, website, media, etc.) however your citations and references may not be totally correct. Always review to make sure they are correct as per the requirements of this course.

References should be listed in alphabetical order. Individual references should use hanging indent format. Double-space all entries. The word references at the top of this page is centered but not bolded or italicized.

Appendix B

Links To Websites with Additional APA Information

APA -- http://www.apastyle.org/

Citation Machine -- http://citationmachine.net/index2.php

Dr. Paper Help -- http://thewritedirection.net/drpaper/help/05-07-apastyle.htm

Purdue Owl -- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Vanguard -- http://psychology.vanguard.edu/faculty/douglas-degelman/apa-style/

APA sample paper with references to sections in APA manual:

http://supp.apa.org/style/PM6E-Corrected-Sample-Papers.pdf

Quick Reference guide: http://www.ogs.edu/resources/docs/library/apa6quickref.pdf

Appendix C

Cover pages, tables of contents, and some other introductory material are not covered in the APA manual. This Appendix contains a template that you may follow as you set up those pages for your capstone that you submit to Ferris State University. The template starts on the next page of this manual.

(Note: Running head title should be 50 characters or less. Place running head in header and follow on same line by page number placed flush right; title page is page 1.)

{Insert Full Capstone Title here in Title Case}

By

{Insert Authors NAME}
{Insert prior Degree(s) such as BS/BA}
{Insert name of UNIVERSITY}, {Year}
(List your most recent degree first)

Advisor:
Dr. Douglas L. Blakemore (or whoever your advisor is)
Full Professor
Accounting, Finance, and Information Systems Department

{Insert Semester, Year}
Ferris State University
Big Rapids, MI

DEDICATION

(If dedication is made, place it near center of page)

This is dedicated to …..

(Dedication is optional)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

(Place near center of page if acknowledgements are given)

I would like to thank …

(Acknowledgement is optional)

Table of Contents

Note; Please put all level 1, 2, 3 headings in table of contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

(Note: not bolded)

The abstract should be one paragraph and a maximum of 250 words. The paragraph should be in block format (no indents). Center the word "Abstract" (no bold, formatting, italics, underlining, or quotation marks). Beginning with the next line, write a concise summary of the key points of your research.
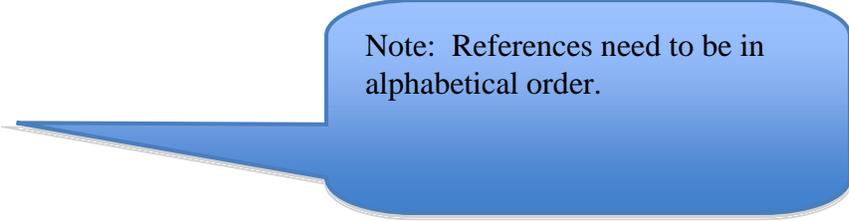
Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

References

Note: References need to be in alphabetical order.

Appendix (add letter if more than one)
(Appendix is optional)