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INTRODUCTION TO THE SOE DOCTORAL CAPSTONE GUIDE

Purpose
The purpose of the Doctoral Capstone Guide is twofold. First, this guide supports learners and faculty at Capella University in understanding the professional doctorate capstone process. It provides an overview of the doctoral process and outlines milestones by which learners fulfill the academic and administrative requirements for their doctoral degree at Capella University and describes the roles and responsibilities of the learner, the mentor, and the university support staff. Second, this guide provides school-specific directions for the 9971 coursersroom. Section 4: Understanding the Capstone Requirements outlines each milestone, guidelines for completion, and corresponding instructions related to assignments in the 9971 courses.

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT PROCESS

Introduction
The School of Education’s EdD program delivers a doctoral learning experience that culminates in an applied project based in a field of specialization that leads to organizational improvement. The doctoral capstone project is intended to provide an experience that is innovative, distinctive, and integrative with specific coursework, and that leads to a showcase outcome for the learner’s career portfolio. The emphasis is on the scholar-practitioner model of learning and combining it with innovative practices and a project-orientated approach common in learning organizations that affords learners an opportunity to accomplish a unique, relevant, value-added outcome beneficial to a broad array of applications that advance career success. The learner is positioned to have an effect and make potentially significant contributions within their organization and in the larger education community. At the same time, the learner develops an applied research project of study that meets the doctoral quality standards of a Doctor of Education.

Doctoral Capstone Milestones
Every doctoral capstone project is unique, but the process moves through a similar sequence of steps for all capstone learners. Capella refers to these steps as milestones. The purpose of milestones is to organize the progress of the project into manageable interim targets arrayed in a logical sequence. The milestone sequence allows learners to be efficient and effective in progressing toward completion. In the doctoral capstone coursersroom, each milestone aligns with a specific assignment.

The time required to complete each doctoral capstone project milestone varies because learners progress at different rates and each applied project is unique. The speed of progress depends on the nature of the project plan and how quickly, carefully, and effectively learners achieve competencies. The 5 Project Milestones are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Mentor and Program/Specialization Approval of Proposed Capstone Project and Deliverable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mentor and Committee Approval of Capstone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>School Approval of Capstone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Doctoral Capstone Courseroom

After learners complete their required didactic courses, doctoral capstone learners will move to a courseroom in which the assigned mentor is their courseroom instructor. The doctoral capstone is the culmination of your doctoral efforts to apply the skills of an independent researcher, connect theory to practice within your chosen field, and demonstrate your development as a scholar-practitioner. Completion of a doctoral capstone serves as a public confirmation that you possess the ability to understand the literature in your field, engage in critical analysis, communicate effectively, and complete a scholarly project by following through on tasks and meeting deadlines as expected of a doctoral graduate.

The courseroom is organized by milestones headings, each with unit work that is required to complete the doctoral capstone. Within each unit, you will find the specific assignments that contribute to milestone completion along with school-specific resources. The course begins with the Quarterly Plan of Action Form (PoA Form), listing the specific assignments that you will complete during the quarter, and culminates with a final review of the Quarterly Plan of Action to evaluate your progress across the quarter through satisfactory completion of course assignments.

One of the most commonly cited benefits of the doctoral capstone courseroom is the sense of academic community it builds among learners. Learners are strongly encouraged to participate in the community building elements the courseroom provides in the discussions.

Please Note:
The doctoral capstone course is required to be taken a minimum of two consecutive quarters. Your capstone is highly individualized, and the rate at which you'll progress will depend on many factors such as your mastery of key competencies, your ability to manage your time, and your research design. Each learner is different and may need to take more or less time to complete each milestone.

The courseroom resets every quarter, which means that the information submitted in the courseroom is not carried over to the new courseroom. As such, learners are reminded to save their written work outside of the courseroom each quarter. All completed milestones are updated on your milestone transcript, so you will not need to resubmit verification of previously completed milestones each quarter.

Communication within the Courseroom

Although communication between learners and may occur in several places, primary interaction with your mentor should occur within courseroom. All work related to the capstone must be submitted in the designated courseroom areas. Learners are expected to log-into the course once a week (every seven days). Please see the Mentor Expectations in the courseroom for more details on your mentor’s communication expectations.

Course Participation

According to Capella University Policy 2.02.02, initial course participation refers to the submission of grade-eligible courseroom activities before the end of course census day, and ongoing course participation refers to the submission and completion of grade-eligible courseroom activities throughout the course. In 9971, initial course participation involves the completion of the Plan of Action Form assignment before the end of the first Friday of the course. To maintain ongoing participation throughout the quarter, you are required to submit assignment (drafts or final submissions) in the designated assignment drop-box and submit the end of quarter progress review assignment.
Discussion Board postings are non-graded and therefore do not count toward initial or ongoing participation. Capella will begin sending reminder notifications after you have not posted for 14 days. If you do not post within 28 days, Capella will automatically drop you from the course.

Please make sure you review University Policy Page on Campus iGuide and the course syllabus for more details.

**The Plan of Action**

At the beginning of each quarter, learners will submit a Quarterly Plan of Action Form (PoA) outlining plans for completing specific assignments during the capstone quarter. Mentors are responsible for reviewing the Quarterly PoA Form and determining if the learner is tracking to complete named assignments for the quarter. The Quarterly PoA Form assignment serves three purposes: (a) Submission of the quarterly PoA form triggers the release of financial aid. (b) The quarterly PoA form confirms which assignment(s) are currently in progress. (c) Mentors will use the quarterly PoA form to evaluate their mentees progress at the end of the quarter. Please work closely with your mentor on your PoA and add any pertinent details that relate to your capstone project. See the course syllabus for details.

**End of Quarter Progress Review**

At the end of each quarter, you and your mentor will review your Quarterly Plan of Action Form to evaluate your progress across the quarter. The Week 10 Assignment is an opportunity for your mentor to assess your progress toward milestone completion. The assignment of a Satisfactory or Not Satisfactory grade will be based on the progress you made on satisfactorily completing the assignments identified in your Quarterly PoA Form.

**Minimum Expectations for the Doctoral Capstone Courseroom and Academic Standing**

Grading for this course is satisfactory (S) or not satisfactory (NS). Your course grade is based on your mentor’s assessment of your progress completing the assignments outlined in your Plan of Action (PoA) and as evidenced in your Week 10 End of Quarter Progress Review.

Failure to make significant progress toward milestone completion each quarter may result in a grade of not satisfactory (NS) for the Doctoral Capstone course. Learners who receive an NS grade will receive an academic standing warning notification. Learners who receive a second consecutive NS grade will be notified that they will be withdrawn due to failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing and will be given the option to appeal. Per University Policy 3.01.04 Academic Standing, doctoral learners who have been administratively withdrawn from the university as a result of failing to meet program-specific requirements are not eligible for readmission to that program or admission to any doctoral program at Capella University. Learners who have their appeal granted will be allowed to register for one additional quarter. Learners who receive an NS grade in the third consecutive quarter will be administratively withdrawn with no other options for appeal. Learners who earn an S grade at any point in this process will return to good academic standing.
SECTION 2. UNDERSTANDING THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

What is the Doctoral Capstone Project?

Each School of Education doctoral graduate must complete a final capstone project. The capstone aims to develop a practice change project within an organization that requires a well-reasoned, scholarly assessment of a problem, opportunity, or challenge. It should identify resolution or a forward-thinking approach with logical recommendations for organizational improvement. The project is applied (meaning more focused on applying theory rather than creating new theory), education-oriented (based in the specialization of study), and project-based (meaning it is practitioner-oriented with recommendations for action rather than theory-based recommendations for future research).

Guiding Principles for the Doctoral Capstone Project

In collaboration with key stakeholders within an organization:

- Examine a problematic process/problem within an organization that could be improved through the implementation of a capstone project deliverable option.
- Identify the specific evidence and data that serves to define the need or opportunity and the potential impact on the organization.
- Include a sound and relevant theoretical and scholarly foundation from articles published in academic and practitioner journals/resources.
- Determine a potential action or intervention to bring about an organizational improvement. Consider the linkage of the intervention to organizational goals and objectives, stakeholder interest in the intervention, cost, and visibility.
- Review your role within your organization and determine whether you can acquire the appropriate permission(s) to develop your deliverable to address the problem.
- Communicate with clarity and structure and reflect appropriate doctoral-level conceptualization, critical thinking, and writing.

Note about the site: The Capstone Project must be a problem supported by sound data and relevant literature with an organization that has provided site permission to the learner and accessible throughout your project. It cannot be literature-based or conceptual idea.

Doctoral Capstone Options

The School of Education permits four types of deliverables within two major categories.

Research Paper: A publishable scholar-practitioner analysis based on research about a specific problem or issue appropriate to the learner’s specialization.

- Action Research Monograph
- Evaluation Study

Professional Product: Application of research to create a specific arrangement of materials and activities to bring about improvement in educational practice at one institutional setting.

- Curriculum Product
- Change Management Plan
Please note that not all SOE specializations allow every capstone type. Please check to find out what capstone types are acceptable for your specialization. For a more detailed description of each deliverable, please follow review the EdD Capstone Deliverable Guide.

The Doctoral Capstone Final Report and Deliverable

The Report: The Doctoral Capstone Project Report is a scholarly paper that describes how the project was carried out, how the deliverable was developed, and how it will be used to inform practice in the local setting. The Doctoral Capstone Report is a written document using APA-style for formatting, data tables, and figures.

The Deliverable: The deliverable is a paper or product developed for an organization to solve a problem based on the analysis of valid and reliable data. Different doctoral capstone project types will have different deliverable outcomes. All deliverables follow the general guidelines below:

- **Guideline 1: Clear Category and Type.** The Deliverable for each Doctoral Capstone Project must fit clearly and unambiguously into one and only one category (Research Paper or Professional Product) and one and only one deliverable type (Action Research Monograph, Evaluation, Curriculum, or Change Management Plan).

- **Guideline 2: Standalone Document.** The Deliverable must be a separate document from the Final Report. The Deliverable is to be a standalone paper or product created for a specific target audience at the site.

- **Guideline 4: Design Models.** The Deliverable must follow a design model appropriate to the deliverable type and should fit the professional or institutional audience for which it is intended.

Choosing a Deliverable

The following guidelines will assist you in selecting a deliverable for your Doctoral Capstone Project.

1. Examine a problematic process/issue in your organization supported by data that could be improved through the implementation of a planned intervention.

2. Identify the specific evidence or data that serve to define the need or opportunity and the potential impact.

3. Determine a potential action, intervention, or change that could be implemented to bring about improvement. Consider the life cycle of the intervention, the linkage of the intervention to organizational goals and objectives, stakeholder interest in the intervention, cost, and visibility.

4. Review your role in your organization and determine whether you can acquire the appropriate permission(s) to develop your project.

5. Identify other potential organizational barriers to implementing your intervention and conducting the study.

6. Plan and design the interventions following the appropriate guidelines in the EdD Capstone Deliverable Guide.
SECTION 3. MENTEE-MENTOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The development and implementation of a Doctoral Capstone Project is not an independent effort. Doctoral learners work under the supervision of their mentors and committee members who have subject matter expertise. Learners are solely responsible for the quality and integrity of all aspects of their Capstone Project that includes the development and writing of the final manuscript.

SOE mentees will work through the milestones sequentially. Work is expected to be consistent, and progress tracked in the courseroom. It is important to remember that some milestones are iterative (meaning you may be asked to rewrite the document several times based on feedback) and they may take longer than anticipated. As you wait for feedback, continue to work on the next phase of your project. When you receive feedback, your prompt responsiveness will help you progress efficiently through the milestones.

Role of Doctoral Capstone Mentee

Upon entering the project phase of a Doctoral Capstone, the graduate learner is now fully engaged in professional scholarly inquiry and who works with a faculty mentor to complete each of the Doctoral Capstone Project milestones.

Mentees are expected to:

- Apply an understanding about the process in the completion of each Doctoral Capstone Project milestone.
- Use Capella Doctoral Capstone resources to develop a plan and final project document that aligns with school and University requirements.
- Dive deeply into the study of the literature, applying the skills and competencies gained as a Doctoral Capstone learner.
- Keep the principles of ethical conduct and human subject protection at the forefront of project design and implementation.
- Submit original work. No third parties, including mentor and committee, can write any part of the paper for the learner nor conduct the research or analyze the results. All work done must be by the learner.
- Avoid misconduct and academic dishonesty by ensuring the integrity of the data collection process and avoiding plagiarism.
- Assess personal understanding of the process and discuss areas of concern, as well as individual strengths, with the mentor.
- Proactively request information from the mentor and other academic support experts to address gaps in knowledge and understanding.
- Actively engage in seeking information about the Doctoral Capstone Project process, learn about the milestone sequence, and map milestone tasks and activities to a personal plan.
- Communicate regularly with the mentor in the courseroom and adhere to the mentor’s stated expectations regarding the frequency of communication and the timelines for assignments and deliverables.
• Engage with the mentor or committee members respectfully and professionally.
• Appropriately receive and act on any feedback provided by the mentor or committee.
• Ensure that the quality and writing level of any submissions meets or exceeds program, school, and university standards.
• Ensure that all project submissions align with corresponding rubrics at the proficient level or higher.

Role of the Doctoral Capstone Project Mentor
Each Doctoral Capstone learner, or mentee, works with a faculty mentor to progress through the Doctoral Capstone Project completion process. The mentor’s role is a combination of leader and collaborator, director and facilitator, coach, and challenger. The mentor provides the mentee with the guidance and support that allows the mentee to progress toward project completion.

General Mentor Expectations in the Courseroom:
• Establish expectations regarding frequency of communication; regular check-ins; and mentor-initiated contact to evaluate progress, provide feedback, and offer supportive guidance.
• Engage regularly in the courseroom.
• Provide Doctoral Capstone Project guidance and direction throughout the process.
• Highlight Capella resources to mentees. Referrals may include university resources found on Campus (iGuide), milestone-specific resources such as IRB materials, and school-specific resources.
• Collaborate with mentees to promote consistent progress in milestone completion. For example, many external factors can influence how a mentee progresses toward milestone completion. The mentor, however, consistently follows up with mentees to assess progress, help mentees redirect their focus, or set due dates for deliverables.
• Advise mentees about project plan requirements that ensure alignment with ethical conduct and school requirements. When necessary, mentors will require changes to a project to ensure that tenets of ethical conduct are honored.
• Respectfully, yet directly, provide critical feedback on work.

Mentor-Mentee Relationship
The mentee completes the Doctoral Capstone Project with the guidance, support, and direction of the mentor. The working relationship between the learner mentee and the faculty mentor focuses on one goal: the learner’s completion of the Doctoral Capstone Project. At each step in the process, the mentee produces deliverables for mentor review and critique. The mentee uses his or her mentor’s feedback to clarify, revise, strengthen, and complete each project element. This iterative process is the backbone of the mentor-mentee relationship.
The following assumptions form the infrastructure for this crucial working relationship:

- **Both mentor and mentee commit to upholding ethical principles as integral to the Doctoral Capstone Project process that includes discussions about ensuring participant protections and avoiding misconduct and academic dishonesty as the plan is developed or as part of the implementation stage of the project.**

- **Mentee and mentor each bring specific competencies, skills, and knowledge to their collaboration. For example, mentees focus on an area of practice change, while mentors provide guidance and direction to develop the plan and final Doctoral Capstone Project.**

- **Mentees acknowledge that the mentor has experience in Doctoral Capstone Project completion and has expertise that the mentee can benefit from; based on this, mentees value and use the advice provided.**

- **Mentors acknowledge that the mentee is engaged in a learning process and that mentees can benefit from guidance and direction from the mentor while exercising independent decision making and personal accountability for their project.**

- **Mentees are independent project managers who accept the guidance, coaching, direction, and support provided by the mentor to complete Capstone milestones.**

- **Each mentor-mentee relationship has unique interpersonal dynamics. As the relationship moves forward, its effectiveness and maintenance requirements that both mentor and mentee engage in objective, respectful, and consistent communication.**

- **Mentors and mentees work together to ensure that communication channels are used and kept in good working order. For example, mentors or mentees who are confused or lack clarity about expectations must discuss solutions in an open and timely manner.**

**Managing Your Journey**

Success at each stage of your doctoral journey depends on your management skills: How you manage your research project, your relationships, yourself, and your time. Please see [Managing Your Journey](#) on Campus iGuide for assistance in self-management, organization, time management, communications and relationship management, and developing doctoral competence.

**Review Times**

Your mentor and committee members have ten business days to respond to a submission, while school reviewers have approximately 14 business days. In the meantime, learners are expected to begin working on their next assignment or milestone requirements not to delay progress. Submissions must be received no later than Friday of Week 9 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time to receive feedback by the end of the quarter.
SECTION 4. UNDERSTANDING THE CAPSTONE MILESTONE REQUIREMENTS

Overview

The EdD milestone processes and assignments in the courseroom are the same for all capstone learners across all schools; however, each program has unique requirements. Within each unit, learners will find links to school-specific guidebooks, forms, and templates. This section contains the school-specific assignment instructions and guidelines for the EdD programs within the School of Education.

Milestone 1: Mentor and Specialization Approval of the Doctoral Capstone Topic

Introduction

The goal for Milestone 1 is to determine an appropriate organizational improvement problem (the topic) and the deliverable type for project completion. The topic form will officially define the problem, topic, purpose, and the nature of your intended project, and will explain how it fits your specialization.

Guidelines for Successful Completion of Milestone 1

- A capstone topic must first align with your specialization. You will utilize the scientific literature, specific evidence or data that serve to define the need or opportunity and the potential impact on the organization to support and narrow the scope of your topic. The process begins by aligning your topic with the discipline and then narrowing the focus of your topic to respond to a real-world problem to address within your specialization.

- Be sure to include data, evidence, information, and examples to support your statements and assertions. Similarly, provide citations from scholarly and professional literature to demonstrate your knowledge of the field in which your selected project is situated and support your descriptions and explanations of topic proposal components where appropriate.

- Ensure you have site permission.

- Refer to the EdD Capstone Deliverable Guide for detailed information about all capstone types and the Programs of Professional Practice document for details about topic criteria by specialization.

Instructions for Topic Form Completion within the 9971 Course

- Review all required forms located on the EdD Doctoral Capstone Resources page on Campus iGuide. Please make sure you select the correct form for your specific capstone type. While the topic and proposal form are in one document, you will only fill out the Topic section of the form.

- Each Topic and Proposal Approval Form has three major sections to complete for topic approval (Section I. Current State/Needs Analysis, Section II. Proposed Future State/Context for the Study/Action Plan, Section III. Communication and Scholarship). For each of the three sections, the form has a Criteria for Proficient Rating. Review the Criteria for Proficient Ratings related your specific capstone deliverable type to ensure you meet each of the required criteria areas before submission. For the School-level review, the criteria are marked Proficient or Not-Proficient.
• Submit your **Topic and Proposal Approval Form** to your mentor for feedback and approval within the designated assignment area.

• In 9971, Milestone 1 is complete when you met all the rubric criteria for the assignment for **mentor approval** (scoring proficient or above in all categories) and have **school approval** of Part 1 of the Topic and Proposal Approval Form (scoring proficient in all three criteria categories).

• Make sure you use the proper support tools such as the **source matching tool** in the courseroom to check your work to ensure proper attribution of sources and writing tools such as **Writing in the Third Person** and the **MEAL Plan**.

• Please note that the development of the content for the topic form is an iterative process with your mentor, with each revision often sparking the need for further changes until everything is aligned. These iterations and revisions are a necessary and customary part of the doctoral research process.

**Special Instructions for Learners in the Shared EdD Specializations (ELM, PIL, AE, C&I).**

• In the shared EdD courses, learners submit the **Topic and Proposal Approval Form** in their EDD83x4 course. If learners do not garner M1 approval in EDD83x4, they can re-submit for topic approval in their next didactic course (EDD83x8/EDD8366).
  
  o **If you have received official topic approval (M1) during your coursework, you will move directly to Milestone 2 in 9971.** Please make sure you provide your mentor with your approved topic form.
  
  o **If you did not receive topic approval in your didactic course (EDD83x4/EDD83x8/ EDD8366), move directly to Milestone 1 in 9971.**

**Milestone 2: Mentor and School Approval of Doctoral Capstone Proposal**

**Introduction**

The goal for Milestone 2 is to continue to build on the work you did in M1 and develop a full proposal of your research project for approval. The EdD Capstone Proposal Form includes the problem statement, organizational background, theoretical framework, and description of your deliverable.

**Guidelines for Successful Completion of Milestone 2**

• You will utilize the scientific literature, specific evidence or data that serve to define the need or opportunity and the potential impact on the organization to support the problem identified within your chosen organization.

• Be sure to include data, evidence, information, and examples to support your statements. Similarly, provide citations from scholarly and professional literature to demonstrate your knowledge of the field in which your selected project is situated and support your descriptions and explanations of topic proposal components where appropriate.

• Ensure you have an evidence-based project. Every project should provide a rationale for how the project will address the issue that was selected, which includes the background data and evidence that were used to identify and validate that this project addresses an authentic problem in an authentic setting. A project could be justified from a needs assessment, test scores, prior surveys, etc. Learners should
collaborate with leaders at the capstone site to identify a problem or situation that needs to be addressed.

Refer to the EdD Capstone Deliverable Guide for detailed information about all SOE capstone types.

**Instructions for Proposal Form Completion in the 9971 Course**

- All required forms are located on the EdD Doctoral Capstone Resources page on Campus iGuide. Please make sure you select the correct form for your specific capstone type. While the topic and proposal form are in one document, you will only fill out the Proposal Section of the form.

- Each **Topic and Proposal Approval Form** has several major sections to complete for proposal approval. For each of the sections, the form has the **Criteria for Proficient Rating**. Please make sure you review the Criteria for Proficient Rating related your specific capstone deliverable type to ensure you meet each of the required criteria as well as the rubric criteria for the corresponding assignment.

- Learners submit their **Topic and Proposal Approval Form** to their mentor for feedback and approval in the designated assignment area.

- In 9971, Milestone 2 is complete when you met the rubric criteria for the assignment for mentor approval (scoring proficient or above in all areas) and have school approval of Part 2 of the Topic and Proposal Approval Form by scoring proficient in all criteria areas on the form.

- Make sure you use the proper support tools such as the **source matching tool** in the courseroom to check your work to ensure proper attribution of sources and writing tools such as **Writing in the Third Person** and the **MEAL Plan**

- Please note that the development of the content for the proposal form is an iterative process with your mentor, with each revision often sparking the need for further changes until everything is aligned. These iterations and revisions are a necessary and customary part of the doctoral research process. However, review by the school is not meant to be iterative, so please ensure you are submitting your best work that is free of any errors.

**Notes for the shared EdD specializations (ELM, PIL, AE, C&I).** Learners in the shared EdD courses created an initial draft of their proposal in the 83x8/8366 courses. Please make sure you provide your mentor with the feedback you received from your course instructor as this is valuable information to assist your mentor in the continued development of your proposal. If the mentor has questions about the feedback from the course and would like converse with the instructor, please contact your department chairperson.

**Milestone 3. Ethics Review/IRB Screening**

**Introduction**

Capella University is committed to the responsible conduct of research and fostering research that is both sound and ethical. Research is expected to be conducted in compliance with human subject protections consistent with regulatory requirements. At Capella University, the role of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is to ensure that the rights of human subject participants are respected and that research studies comply with the
regulatory requirements of ethics and human subject protection. The goal for Milestone 3 is to obtain IRB approval. Make sure you have completed your CITI training before IRB submission and that your CITI certificate is current.

The IRB screens all Doctoral Capstone Projects to determine the level of IRB review required by the federal regulations. Capella University’s IRB uses IRBManager, a third-party system, to manage the IRB process. Applications in IRBManager are web-based forms (called xforms). The IRB forms have built-in skip logic and supplemental questions, meaning that answers to some questions/sets of questions are only required based on your responses.

Projects that are determined not to involve human subjects research as federally defined will be considered to have passed the screening. Projects that are determined to involve human subjects research will require further IRB review, and learners will be required to complete an IRB Application. Projects that involve greater than minimal risk to participants require a robust review by the full IRB committee. Minimal risk human subjects research studies, including those that involve existing records, tend to present fewer ethical concerns but are still reviewed by the IRB regulations. Studies with significant risk may not be appropriate for novice capstone researchers.

**Important Note:** Learners are responsible for adhering to ethical and legal standards, as well as the specific project guidelines for their discipline. Once IRB approval is granted, the procedures and methods cannot be changed without consultation and approval from the IRB.

**Forms Used for Milestone 3**

The primary forms are the **IRB Screening Form** and the **IRB Application**. Both are standard forms used across Capella. Learners will become familiar with, and use, the online IRBManager system for access to the screening and application forms.

- **CITI Training Completion.** CITI modules required by Capella University. Learners must register at the [CITI site](#) and can complete the modules online. A certificate of completion is awarded to the learner after completion of each module, and these certificates should be posted in the 9971 courseroom. Your CITI Certificate is valid for three years from the date of completion. **Please note** that most EdD learners complete CITI training in their didactic courses and if you previously completed the training, you do not need to re-take the modules.

- **IRB Screening Form:** Learners will submit the Doctoral Capstone IRB Screening Form to the Capella Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review. The IRB will determine, based on its review of the information provided, whether a full IRB application will be required from the learner. The IRB ensures that the rights of human subject participants are respected.

- **IRB Application:** If the research project is determined to be one that requires a full IRB application submission, the Capella IRB will notify the learner of such by email. In this case, the learner is required to register with IRBManager and complete and submit a full IRB application. Once submitted, the IRB will review the application and render a decision. The decision may be: (a) not approved and revisions requested; (b) conditional approval; (c) full approval.
Instructions for Completing IRB Screening in the 9971 Course

1. Register for IRBManager and Complete the Doctoral Capstone IRB Screening Form. **Important:** Choose *new Doctoral Capstone Screening Form*. Do NOT choose New IRB Application.
   - Tips for registering for IRBManager:
     - Use your primary email address (you will receive an email from the IRB based on the email address you register with)
     - Have your learner ID handy as you will need it during the registration process
     - Consult the [Registering for IRBManager](#) for step-by-step instructions.

2. Once you have registered, you will access and complete the Capstone Screening Form. Login to IRBManager and follow these instructions:
   - Under “actions” in the left-hand navigation window, click on Doctoral Capstone IRB. Complete the Screening form. Be prepared to attach the following:
     - Topic and Proposal Approval Form
     - Site permission on letterhead
     - Any data collection instruments.

   Please note, SOE EdD learners do not write an ethics paper.

3. Once you’ve completed the form, submit the form by using the submit button on the last page of the form.

Once submitted, your Screening Form will be reviewed within approximately five business days. The IRB will determine if your study meets the criteria for human subject research or not.

   - **If the IRB determines that your project does not involve human subjects research**, no further action is required, and you may proceed to Milestone 4, the carrying out of your capstone project. You and your mentor will receive a notification.

   - **If your study does involve human subjects research**, the IRB will provide you with instruction on how to complete the IRB Application. Your IRB Application will have to be reviewed and receive approval before you may move onto milestone 4

**Submitting an IRB Application**

You will receive an email from the IRB Office if you need to complete the IRB application (or Records Based Research Application). Follow the instructions for how to complete the application given in the email. Following these instructions is essential. The IRB will inform you which application you need to complete. If your study is determined to involve human subject participants, you must complete the IRB Application to obtain IRB approval to conduct your capstone.
Milestone 4. Mentor and Committee Approval of Doctoral Capstone

Introduction

The goal of Milestone 4 is the completion and approval of the full capstone project (paper and deliverable) by the learner’s mentor and committee. The project itself will consist of what was approved in Milestone 2.

Guiding Principles for the Final Report and Deliverable

The audiences are different for the final report and product:

- The audience for the final written report is the Capella academic community. The Capella, the mentor, committee, and school reviewers will assess the project using a set of rubrics that will determine its readiness to serve as the culminating demonstration of the scholarly performance of the learner and as evidence of the learner’s readiness to be award the Doctor of Education degree.
- The audience for the deliverable is the learner’s organization. For that audience, the focus is on the professional finish, the practicality, and the immediacy of the usefulness of the deliverable for improving the institution.

The final report is expected to meet all doctoral-level scholarly research and writing, including Academic Honesty, and be free of all grammatical and mechanical errors. Review the documents on the EdD Doctoral Capstone Resources page, Writing in the Third Person and the MEAL Plan.

Learners will write the paper in alignment with the SOE Capstone Report Template and create the deliverable in alignment with the EdD Capstone Deliverable Guide.

Please Note: As research at the doctoral level is an iterative process, it is possible that there will be multiple revisions based on review feedback, including the committee review, that will be needed until all aspects of the content are aligned and meet the quality criteria of the rubrics. These iterations and revisions are a necessary and customary part of the doctoral research process.

Doctoral Capstone Final Report Sections

Section 1: Background

- Describe how your topic fits your specialization.
- Establish the historical background of your topic and its importance to your site.
- Describe the organizational context of your site.
- Provide the theoretical framework of your project. This literature review should exhibit scholarly rigor, thoroughness, and critical thinking.
- This section should approximate 20 pages in length.

Section 2: Process

- Describe the process you used to develop your project.
- Describe in detail what you produced (research paper or product).
- Describe your target audience.
- Delineate the steps you used to design your product.
• Describe the content of your project.
• Describe your plan for evaluating your project.
• This section should approximate 20 pages in length.

Section 3 Application
• Describe how the Deliverable was created to bring about improvement in the institution for which it was developed and the Specialization to which it contributes.
• This section should approximate 20 pages in length.

The Applied Research Project Evaluation Criteria
The Applied Research Project evaluation criteria is used by the mentor and committee to review the learner's work and determine if it meets the quality criteria for approval. These criteria include the following:
• Meets the structural requirements of the school for the capstone report/deliverable.
• Meets the academic requirements of the school for the capstone report/deliverable.
• Describes the theoretical basis for the capstone, drawing on theories appropriate to the specialization.
• Demonstrates a command of the scholarly literature related to the capstone.
• Describes the problem that was solved with clarity and comprehensiveness.
• Explains the significance and impact of the completed capstone.
• Uses data appropriately by the type of capstone deliverable demonstrating the need for and impact of the capstone.
• Provides outcomes, findings, and recommendations related to the problem statement or research question that appropriately demonstrate scholarly rational and evidence.
• Provides an abstract in accordance with the University’s requirements for formatting, content and use of APA.
• Written with logic, flow, structure, and content focus to cohesively, comprehensively, and clearly explain the capstone.
• Written using proper grammar, usage, and APA format and style.
• Written using proper paragraph development, transitions, and academic tone.

Instructions for Capstone Project Completion in the 9971 Course
Requirements for this milestone vary depending on the type of doctoral capstone you are undertaking. Please check with your mentor if you have any questions.

• **Ensure you are using the most up-to-date EdD resources.** All of the latest required forms and guides are located on the EdD Doctoral Capstone Resources page on Campus iGuide. Pay specific attention to capstone requirements in the Doctoral Capstone Deliverable Guide for the Deliverable and use EdD Capstone Report Template for the Report.
• **Review the assessment criteria.** Each doctoral capstone project report and deliverable has several major sections to complete. For each of the sections, the form has a *Criteria for Proficient Rating.* Please make sure you review the Criteria for Proficient Rating related to your specific capstone deliverable type to ensure you meet each of the required criteria as well as the rubric criteria for the corresponding assignment.

• **Create and iterate within the courseroom.** Learners submit their doctoral capstone project to their mentor for feedback and approval in the designated assignment area. The assignment area allows for multiple submissions.
  - Note that the development of the content for the doctoral capstone project is an iterative process with your mentor, with each revision often sparking the need for further changes until everything is aligned. Iterations may also occur with the committee during this stage of review and feedback. These iterations and revisions are a necessary and customary part of the doctoral research process.
  - Review the [Communications and Relationship Management](#) page on Campus iGuide for how to respond constructively to feedback and Capella’s procedures for resolving [conflict management](#) and [Developing Doctoral Competency](#) page for ensuring your work demonstrates scholarly expertise and proficiency in critical thinking, writing, research, and information literacy.

• **Submit your work to the source matching tool** in the courseroom to check your work to ensure proper attribution of sources. Review the report and revise any paraphrasing issue and ensure that you have correctly attributed all your sources. When all revisions are complete, submit the revised capstone with the most recent report in the assignment area. Your mentor will also review the report before submitting the report along with your capstone project for Milestone 4 committee review. It is your responsibility to ensure the originality of your work and to use appropriate APA citations.

• ** Ensure you have met Capella’s guidelines for:**
  - Academic Honesty
  - Participant and Site De-Identification Guidelines.
  - The Use of Third-Party Services in Dissertation and Doctoral Capstone Research.
  - Doctoral Publications Review Criteria. Even though Capella Capstone Projects do not go through a formal publications review, they still must meet the same criteria for **APA, ethical and legal requirements,** and **writing requirements** when submitted for M4 and M5 reviews. Also, review the Writing and Revising page on iGuide for further assistance.

• **Submit in the correct assignment area.** Not all Milestone 4 assignments may apply to your capstone type.
  - If your capstone type does not require you to collect and analyze data, you will move directly to the Mentor Approval of Doctoral Capstone Report assignment and then complete the Committee Approval of the Capstone assignment.
If your capstone type does require data collection and analysis, you will complete the following course assignments:

- Mentor Approval of Doctoral Capstone Report assignment
- Mentor Approval of Doctoral Capstone Report (either the qualitative or quantitative depending on your capstone) assignment
- Mentor Approval of Doctoral Capstone Report assignment.
- Committee Approval of the Capstone assignment.

**Milestone 4 is complete when you’ve:**

- Met the rubric criteria for the data collection and analysis assignments (only if it applies to your capstone type).
- Met the rubric criteria for mentor approval and committee approval (scoring proficient or above in all areas).
- Met the written requirements for Academic Honesty, Participant and Site Deidentification Guidelines, and Doctoral Publications Review Criteria.

**The Milestone 4 Committee Review Process**

When the capstone project meets all proficient (or above) rubric criteria, the project is deemed approved by the mentor and will be sent by your mentor to the committee for review with the attached EdD Milestone Four Committee Approval Form. The mentor oversees this part of the review process by ensuring all reviews are sent out and collected in a timely manner.

Committee members have up to ten business days to complete their review and will provide the mentor, via Capella email, the completed rubric along with substantive feedback for improvements. Learners should expect changes as it is a typical part of the committee review process. It is also common for committee members to have various points-of-view due to their specific area of expertise.

Once all feedback is received and assembled by the mentor, the mentor will meet with their learner to ensure a common understanding of the feedback, and create plan and timeline to implement the feedback. Once feedback has been thoughtfully and thoroughly addressed by the learner (as determined by the mentor), the document will be returned for additional review(s) to the committee members until they deem it ready for approval.

One it is approved by the committee, the mentor will mark the corresponding assignment complete in the 9971 courseroom and then send the approved capstone and deliverable, the committee approved rubrics, and the source matching report to the Doctoral Success Center (DSC) to initiate M5 review.

**Milestone 5. School Approval of Doctoral Capstone**

**Introduction**

The goal is to complete the final processes of approval for the capstone project as a major SOE program requirement, which includes the school and dean review and approval, as well as the presentation of the capstone project to the mentor.
There are two final review approval components to Milestone 5: (a) school review and approval of the capstone project; and (b) dean’s review and approval of the capstone project. The learner will also present their project to their mentor that may include the school committee. The presentation is meant to be celebratory and is not graded.

**Guidelines for Successful Completion of Milestone 5**

The final reviews ensure your Doctoral Capstone Project meets all academic and scholarly criteria as outlined by the University. These include:

- **SOE EdD Doctoral Capstone Criteria** as found in the [Doctoral Capstone Project Guide](#), the [EdD Programs of Professional Practice](#), and the [EdD Capstone Deliverable Guide](#).

- **Research and Scholarship Criteria** such as research ethics, topic selection, IRB guidelines, and data collection and compliance. Please review the [Research & Scholarship](#) page on Campus iGuide.

- **Academic Honesty.** It is your responsibility to ensure the originality of your work and use appropriate citations. Make sure you review the report and revise any paraphrasing issue and ensure that you have correctly attributed all your sources. Please review Capella’s [Academic Honesty Policy](#).

- **Ethical and Legal Requirements, APA Alignment, Capstone Document Requirements, and Writing Requirements.** Carefully review your work to ensure you have met the requirements for ethical and legal requirements, APA alignment requirements, capstone document requirements, and writing-related requirements. Please review the [Participant and Site De-Identification Guidance](#) document and the [Doctoral Publications Review Criteria](#) for details.

**Instructions for Capstone Project Completion in the 9971 Course**

- **Assignment Submission:** When your entire capstone project has garnered M4 approval from your mentor and committee and you have incorporated all the feedback, ensured you have met the University requirements (see above), submit the revised capstone with the most recent source matching report in the designated assignment area. Your mentor will also review the source matching report before submitting the report along with your capstone project for Milestone 5 school review via Capella email to DSC.

- **Assignment Revisions:** If you do not garner school approval (Deferred or Not Ready for Review), your mentor will check “no” on the scoring guide, return the capstone to you along with the school’s feedback, and you will incorporate any changes requested, and resubmit to the assignment area. Please note that School Review is not an automatic approval and there could be revisions requested. In addition, school reviewers do not edit your document but provide an example of an instance that you will need to correct throughout the entire document.

- **Assignment Completion:** To complete the assignment, you must receive scores of proficient or above for all criteria on the [School Approval of the Doctoral Capstone Scoring Guide](#). When you receive school approval of your capstone, your mentor will check “yes” on the [School Approval of Doctoral Capstone Scoring Guide](#).
• **Submission to the Dean for Review.** If your work was “approved with changes,” your mentor will work with you to revise your work and will validate that all the revisions requested by the school have been completed. Once the revisions have been completed, you will ensure you have:
  
a. Signed the [capstone publishing agreement](#) that is included in the appendix of your paper.

b. Converted your final revised capstone report into PDF form so your mentor can send it back to DSC so that it can be sent for Dean approval.

The Doctoral Capstone Project will be sent by DSC staff to be approved by the Dean of the school and typically takes 14 business days. When the Dean has approved the Doctoral Capstone Project, DSC staff will upload the doctoral capstone report to the University’s repository on the learner’s behalf. Only the report is uploaded to the repository, not the deliverable.

**The Final Presentation.** Learners coordinate and complete a presentation of their work to their mentor. The presentation is usually conducted through a conference call or Adobe Connect Room or other visual technology. The presentation is an opportunity for learners to share and discuss the completed project and recommendations from it. The learner should use the [EdD Final Presentation Template](#) to craft the presentation. The presentation can occur after school approval. As an option, the mentor and learner could consider inviting the committee members to attend the final presentation conference call. The presentation is not graded as an assignment.

Please note, the [Statement of Review Form](#) is currently under revision. Please see your mentor for the latest update.

**Degree Audit and Conferral**

The Learner Services and Operations team will be completing a degree audit to ensure all program requirements have been met. These program requirements include submission of the application to graduate, completion of all coursework and residency requirements for your degree. Dean’s approval triggers the degree audit process and your conferral once your grade is posted. The audit typically takes 20 business days after the final grade has posted. You will receive an email regarding your graduation status after the completion of the audit. Your degree will be conferred on the last day of the month in which all program requirements have been completed. If your account is in satisfactory status with no financial holds, your degree conferred transcript will arrive approximately 1-2 weeks after your degree is awarded and your diploma will arrive in approximately 4-6 weeks after your degree is awarded.

**A Note on Remaining in the Capstone Courseroom**

Learners must remain registered in their doctoral capstone course through completion of Milestone 5, the final capstone milestone. When learners receive notification that they have passed Milestone 5, they may drop registration for their capstone course for the following quarter.

**Completion of Milestone 5 in Week 1 or Week 2 of Quarter:** Learners who complete Milestone 5 before 12 a.m. Central time on Friday of Week 1 of any quarter will be automatically dropped and will receive a 100 percent tuition refund. Learners who complete Milestone 5 during Week 2 will be notified of the opportunity to drop before 12 a.m. Central time on Friday of Week 2 of the quarter. However, there may be tuition and financial aid
implications for dropping. Learners should contact their advisor before dropping. Recipients of VA education benefits should contact Military Support to discuss the implications of dropping.

**Completion of Milestone 5 after Week 2 of Quarter:** Learners who complete Milestone 5 after 12 a.m. Central time on Friday of Week 2 of the quarter must remain enrolled in their current capstone course as a participating member of the course until the end of the quarter. To pass the final degree audit, the learner's transcript must reflect a passing grade on the final capstone course. Department of Education rules indicate that learners must maintain ongoing participation to remain enrolled in a course; as a result, learners must continue to participate through the end of the quarter to remain enrolled and receive the final grade necessary to pass the degree audit.

**Modifications to a Doctoral Project**

In rare instances, a learner may need to make substantive modifications to the Doctoral Project Topic or Proposal after having already obtained Milestone 1 and 2 approvals. The learner must request and obtain approval to modify the Topic and Proposal Approval Form before implementing any changes. The mentor should resubmit the modified Topic and Proposal Approval form via email to DSC to initiate school review. *The mentor must include a note in the email explaining that the learner is making a modification to an approved Topic and Proposal Form and requesting that the school conduct another review.* Substantive modifications include changes in:

- the scope of the project
- the focus of the project
- the data being collected for the project
- the targeted population for the project
- the analytical procedures
- the site where the project will be conducted

In the event of uncertainty about whether a modification is substantive, learners and mentors should consult with their Chair for a determination as to whether the school must review the revised forms. In general, consultation is encouraged before making any modifications to an approved Doctoral Capstone project. Following the school’s approval of the revised Topic and Proposal Approval Form, the learner sends a copy of the modified form to the IRB Office requesting approval of the modification. If the modification requires changes to other documents that were reviewed by the IRB (site permission letters, data collection tools, etc., these must be submitted to the IRB as well). In most instances, the learner will not be required to submit a revised ethics review. However, the IRB may request that the ethics review be revised if the modification raises significant new ethical concerns. The IRB will notify the learner and mentor whether email notification of the modification is sufficient, or whether the learner will need to submit a modification form through IRBManager. *Note: School approval (Milestone 1 & 2) and IRB approval (Milestone 3) of the modified Topic and Proposal Approval Form must be obtained before the learner may move forward in implementing the revised Doctoral Capstone project.*
SECTION 5: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The courseroom and Campus iGuide hold a wealth of helpful resources. Some key resources are summarized below.

Advisors

Doctoral advisors provide learners with support in navigating their program. The best way for learners and mentors to contact the doctoral advising team or an individual advisor is by emailing doctoral@capella.edu. Learners and mentors may also phone 1-888-CAPELLA (1-888-227-3552), option 2. Learners should be prepared to schedule an appointment outside of quarter start to address complex issues.

APA Style

Familiarity with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.), typically referred to as APA or APA 6, is assumed. Learners are expected to be proficient in usage. Capella also provides Academic Honesty resources, Additional APA Resources, the APA Style and Format, and APA Style Central.

Library

The Capella University Library has a large database of journal subscriptions, e-books, and dissertations, along with access to the interlibrary loan service. The library's knowledgeable staff are on call for search strategy discussions and discipline-specific consultations. Information is available on Campus (iGuide) at Library. The Capella Library also has created Skill Development Tutorials, which are animated tutorials to help with writing and research. Library Guides The librarians have compiled guides that contain research assistance, subject resources, and other useful resources.

SafeAssign

A source matching tool that compares submitted assignments against a set of academic papers to identify areas of overlap between the submitted assignment and existing works.

School Review Criteria

There are four decision categories for SOE Review:

- Approved
- Approved with Changes – Requires minor changes in APA alignment requirements, dissertation/capstone document requirements, or writing-related issues. (Mentors can approve the changes by their mentees. The document does not require resubmission for review.

- Deferred – The document does not meet APA alignment requirements, Dissertation/Capstone document requirements, and/or writing-related requirements. (Once changes are completed, the document is resubmitted for review).

- Not Ready for Review – The document does not meet ethical and legal standards: failure to de-identify the population/site and/or plagiarism. (Once changes are completed, the document is resubmitted for review).
Smarthinking

Smarthinking is a valuable, online tutoring service available to all Capella learners. More than 160 minutes is available each quarter for learners to use toward tutoring. Thousands of Capella learners use Smarthinking every year. Learners submit discussion postings and course papers to Smarthinking tutors, who provide individual writing feedback, usually within 24 hours. Drop-in tutoring, live chat, and offline questions are also available. Many faculty members require learners to submit writing pieces to Smarthinking for feedback as part of the course curriculum. Information is available through the Smarthinking Tutoring page on Campus (iGuide).

Turnitin

Turnitin is a text-matching software platform that scans submitted papers for instances of potential plagiarism. Common plagiarism errors are discussed in a Turnitin white paper, Defining Plagiarism: The Plagiarism Spectrum: Instructor Insights into the 10 Types of Plagiarism.

Writing Center

The Writing Center has hands-on writing practice. Learners are guided to evaluate and improve their writing. One of the services at the Writing Center is a Writing Self-Assessment which includes a personalized assessment to improve writing. If you have questions, about anything in this document, please confer with your mentor.

Right to Change Requirements

Neither the doctoral capstone courseroom, nor any of the information and requirements contained herein, constitute a contract or create any contractual commitments between Capella University and any student, any prospective student, or any third party. The information and requirements contained in this document and the courseroom are regularly updated and are subject to change without notice at Capella’s University’s discretion.