THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Nursing

NURS 595/596

MSN & MN-NP Capstone Guidelines

Capstone Description

NURS 595/596 are 3-credit Capstones papers comprised of scholarly work undertaken by MSN and MN-NP in student cohorts. Students are organized into groups of 4-6 based on topics they select and paired with faculty supervisors with aligned interests. Students are organized into cohorts of 4-6 who work with one supervisor and a second reader. The Capstone papers can be completed by individual students or student in groups of up to 3. It is expected that the papers are co-written which means that students will submit the same paper for grading to their supervisors.

Capstone Cohorts for MN-NP and MSN Students in 2nd Year

Phase 1: Students Select Topics & Supervisors (June-August)

Students will be assigned topic and faculty supervisors by the MSN and MN-NP Program Coordinators based on the ranked topics in the Qualtrics Survey. MSN students who did not complete the survey and are not registered into NURS 599 (master's Thesis) will be assigned to a capstone cohort by the MSN supervisor, unless extenuating circumstances prevented their participation and the student's choice can be accommodated within the cohorts.

Phase 2: Assigning Capstone Groups & Supervisors (September – December)

Supervisors will contact students and schedule 2-3 initial meetings in the Fall Term to discuss and refine the Capstone focus. Supervisors will guide students to create the capstone proposal (see Appendix A). Supervisors and students will review principles and guidelines for collaborative, inclusive, and respectful group work (Appendix A) to create agreements and expectations for undertaking the Capstone.

Phase 3: Completing the Capstone (January – April)

Supervisors will work with students to meet the evaluation criteria listed below.

Capstone Completion: MN-NP and MSN program differences

NP students graduate in November, and MSNs typically graduate in May. There will be required flexibility and timeline transparency when the Capstone cohorts include both MSN and NP students.
Capstone Format:

- 5,000 to 6,250 words, approximately 20-25 double spaced pages, not including references or appendices.
- Papers completed in groups of three, at the discretion of supervisors, may be longer in length.
- A guide creating the Capstone paper can be found within Appendix C.

Capstone Milestones (2025–2026)

Aug 2025

- Supervisors notified by NP/MSN Coordinator of Capstone cohorts
- Email students: welcome & introductions
- Set cohort meeting schedule (monthly W1, bi-weekly W2)
- For MSN & NP cohorts, create timelines relative to program completion.

Sept–Dec 2025

- Create group values, expectations & goals
- Review student survey topics
- Refine capstone topics & finalize groups
- Discuss group working practices for equal contributions for final paper
- Invite Second Reader
- Submit Second Reader to grad.programs@nursing.ubc.ca
- Complete Capstone proposals (see proposal appendix in guidelines)
- Approve proposal with Second Reader (by end of W1)

Jan–Apr 2026

- Complete Capstones in W2
- Set schedule to review Capstone drafts
- Review & evaluate final Capstone with Second Reader
- Engagement of Second Reader flexible per supervisor
- Grade Capstone

Capstone Supervision and Turnitin Submission

Supervisors are the first point of contact for students related to their Capstone Paper. The MSN and NP program coordinators available to support supervisors as needed.

Capstone paper for non-thesis completion are to be submitted to **Turnitin.** Supervisors will create a Class ID for their cohorts for final submission.

Evaluation Criteria

To ensure transparency for students and consistency among grading for supervisors and 2nd readers, evaluation of the capstone be guided by the following criteria:

Content & Analysis:

- Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the subject matter under consideration.
- Draws on appropriate academic literature and resources.
- Demonstrates critical thinking and analysis in relation to the subject matter.
- Reflection of key trends and issues related to the subject matter is evident.
- Uses examples to illustrate specific points where appropriate and avoids the use of sweeping generalizations.
- Provides a clear purpose statement, and a brief concluding or summary statement.

Writing & Readability: *see UBC graduate academic writing practice: [here](#)*

- Paper is clearly written and concise.
- Presents a logical progression of ideas in a well-organized format.
- Writing style is free of grammatical, spelling and typographical errors, colloquialism, vernacular phrasing, and slang.
- The ideas of others are referred to and accurately referenced.
- Citations are provided and there is no evidence of plagiarism.
- APA referencing style is used accurately.

Grading Practice:

- Each capstone will be graded in its entirety. Students who work in pairs or in groups of 3 will receive the same grade for the capstone project.
- Based on the evaluation criteria above, a percentage grade will be assigned based on "A", "B", or "C" level [Grade Assignment Guidelines](#)

Example of an "A Level" Paper (80-100%): An Outstanding Paper

Content & Analysis

- Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.
- Draws on relevant academic and gray literature.
- Critical analysis is well-developed, insightful, credible, and innovative.
- Incorporates multiple perspectives where appropriate, including attention to key trends, context, social determinants of health, and/or system-level factors.
- Uses well-chosen examples to illustrate points without overgeneralization or simplification.
- Includes a Knowledge Translation plan

Writing & Readability

- Provides a clear purpose statement and a brief concluding or summary statement.
- Content is logically structured, coherent, and consistently linked to the capstone's purpose or thesis.
- Writing is clear, concise, and engaging, with an evident logical flow across paragraphs and sections.
- Organization of the capstone paper is thoughtful and effective.
- Virtually free of grammatical, spelling, typographical, or formatting errors.
- Accurately and consistently uses APA 7th edition style formatting.
- Properly cites all sources with no evidence of plagiarism.
- Language is bias-free and culturally safe[1], including the use of respectful and inclusive terminology across dimensions such as age, disability, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
- Demonstrates awareness of cultural safety, particularly in reference to populations who are marginalized or historically underrepresented.

Example of a "B Level" Paper (68-79%): A Good Paper

Content & Analysis

- Demonstrates understanding of the subject matter, with some minor gaps in depth.
- Draws on relevant academic literature and resources, though may rely on a narrower range or less current sources. Considerations of others would have improved the paper.
- Critical analysis is present lacks depth or originality at times. Arguments are reasonable but not especially insightful or innovative.
- Incorporates some attention to multiple perspectives (e.g., social determinants, context, or system-level factors) but may do so sporadically or without full integration into the whole of the capstone paper.
- Uses examples to illustrate points, though some may be generalized or less clearly connected to key arguments.
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Writing & Readability

- Includes a purpose statement and a concluding or summary statement, though one or both may be underdeveloped.
- Content is mostly well-organized and coherent, but some paragraphs or transitions may lack clarity or full alignment with the paper's purpose.
- Writing is generally clear and readable, with some wordiness or occasional awkward phrasing.
- Organization of the capstone paper shows evidence of some thought.
- Contains some minor errors in grammar, spelling, formatting, or APA style, but these do not significantly impair understanding.
- APA 7th edition formatting is mostly followed with occasional errors.
- Sources are cited appropriately with no major concerns regarding academic integrity.
- Language is mostly respectful and inclusive. May show developing awareness of cultural safety, but some phrasing may lack sensitivity or precision.

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[1] Adapted from https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/general-principles

Example of a "C Level" Paper (60–67%): An Adequate Paper

Content & Analysis

- Demonstrates a basic understanding of the subject matter, though there may be notable gaps in content, accuracy, or depth.
- Draws on limited academic literature. May rely heavily on general sources, outdated references, or insufficient integration of the literature into the paper's argument.
- Critical analysis is minimal or inconsistently applied. Arguments may be underdeveloped, descriptive rather than analytical, or overly simplistic.
- Shows limited or superficial attention to multiple perspectives (e.g., social determinants, context, or system-level factors). Key dimensions may be omitted or only briefly mentioned without elaboration.
- Includes examples, but these may be vague, generic, or only loosely connected to the main points.

Writing & Readability

- May include a purpose statement or conclusion, but either or both may be unclear, missing, or poorly connected to the body of the capstone paper.
- Organization is inconsistent or underdeveloped. Logical flow is disrupted by weak transitions, repetition, or disjointed sections.
- Writing may lack clarity and precision. Repetitive, awkward, or imprecise phrasing may interfere with readability.
- The paper shows limited attention to structure and coherence, making the overall argument harder to follow.
- Contains recurring grammar, spelling, formatting, or APA errors, which are distracting to the reader.
- APA 7th edition formatting is inconsistently applied. Citation issues may be present but do not suggest academic dishonesty.
- Language may be occasionally biased or outdated. Demonstrates limited awareness of cultural safety or inclusive terminology.

Example of a "D Level" Paper (0–59%): An Inadequate Paper

Content & Analysis

- Demonstrates limited or unclear understanding of the subject matter. Significant gaps in content accuracy or relevance are present.
- May be off-topic or only loosely related to the capstone paper's purpose or objectives.
- Draws on little-to-no academic literature. References may be inappropriate, outdated, or entirely missing.
- Critical analysis is largely absent or deeply flawed. Arguments may be illogical, unsupported, or based on inaccurate information.
- Little (or no) engagement with multiple perspectives (e.g., social determinants, context, or system-level factors). Content may be overly generalized or lacking depth.
- Examples, if included, are vague, inaccurate, or unrelated to the main argument.

Writing & Readability

- Purpose statement and/or conclusion is missing, unclear, or unrelated to the body of the paper.
- Paper lacks logical organization. Flow of ideas is disjointed and difficult to follow.
- Writing lacks clarity and coherence. Issues with word choice, sentence structure, or paragraph development impede the reader's understanding.
- Numerous and repeated grammar, spelling, or formatting errors significantly interfere with readability.
- APA 7th edition formatting is inconsistent or absent. Sources may be uncited or improperly cited, raising concerns about academic integrity.
- Language may include inappropriate or biased terminology with little evidence of cultural safety or inclusive practice.

APPENDIX A

Capstone Writing and Group Process Guidelines

Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical advice and structure to support students' success in a collaborative group work. As practicing nurses, many of you may already have experience with group work (some of it positive, some more challenging). It's common to feel initial resistance when asked to engage in group work, but collaboration is a vital part of nursing practice. Whether you're writing a grant, developing a clinical resource, or contributing to a project alongside your regular responsibilities, the ability to work effectively as part of a team is essential. We hope this guide helps reduce some of the stress that can accompany group work and offers strategies to help you navigate your capstone with confidence and professionalism.

First, group work is a spectrum[2]

| All parts of the writing process done together | All writing done together, in person | Planning and editing done in person, writing done in pairs | Planning and editing done in person, writing done alone | One or two writers, with comments from others | One primary writer, with comments from others |

More in-person collaboration   Less in-person collaboration
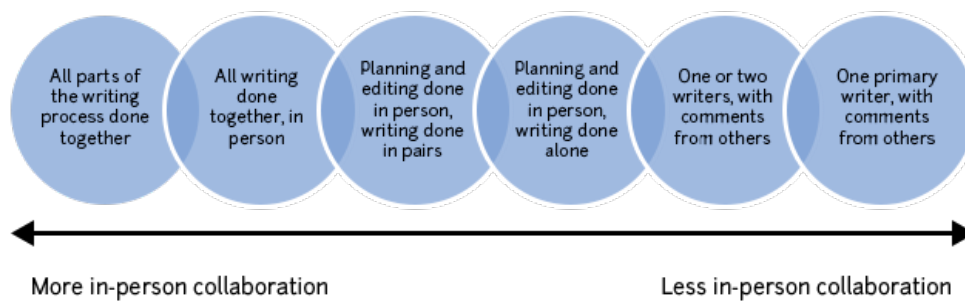
The scholarly work in the Capstone will likely fall somewhere in the middle.

Here is an example of what your collaborative process for the capstone could look like[3]:

(look for helpful tips with the 💡 icon)

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[2] The majority of this collaborative process was adapted from The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:
https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/group-writing/

Version 1: Sept 25th, 2025

1. **Pre-writing process:**
   - Share ideas and brainstorm together. Think about what you want your final capstone to look like.
   - Begin to formulate a draft question.

2. **Planning and logistics:**
   - Establish some ground rules about navigating the writing process.
   - Think about how your group wants to handle conflicts or disagreements[3].
   - Decide together who will write which parts of the capstone (assign roles).
   - Ensure all members are aware of the due dates (proposal, first draft, etc.)
   - Arrange meetings and establish how you will communicate with each other. How often will you meet? Are you going to meet in person or virtually? What platform(s) will you use to communicate with one another?

3. **Research and data collection:**
   - Decide and think about how you will find appropriate sources.
   - Have an understanding of who will read and evaluate the sources found (e.g., all-together, or divided?).

4. **Drafting and writing:**
   - Decide if writing will take place separately or together:
     - *Separately*: each group member has their own portion of writing to do
       - Think about: where does your individual writing fit into the whole document?
     - *Together*: the group actually meets to compose text collaboratively
       - While it can be time-consuming, writing together does ensure that the finished document has one cohesive voice.
       - Talk about how the writing session should go BEFORE you get started. What goals do you have? How will you approach the writing task at hand?

Everyone has their strengths! If you can recognize this, you'll be able to harness your group members' talents to produce

While group work does involve compromise, be willing to argue (respectfully). If there are ideas that you feel strongly about, communicate them and encourage other members of your group to do the same, even if

Many find it helpful to get all of the ideas down on paper in a rough form before discussing exact phrasing.

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[3] Adapted from The University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Centre: https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/process/collaborative-and-group-writing/

Version 1: Sept 25th, 2025

5. **Revising, editing, and proofreading**
   - If your group has drafted parts of the document separately, merge your ideas together into a single document first, then focus on meshing the styles.
     - The first concern is to create a coherent product with a logical flow of ideas, *then* the stylistic differences of the individual portions must be smoothed over.
   - Revise the ideas and structure of the paper <u>first</u> before worrying about smaller, sentence-level errors (like problems with punctuation or grammar).
     - Think about: Is the argument clear? Is the evidence presented in a logical order? Do the transitions connect the ideas effectively?
   - Giving constructive feedback requires focusing on *ideas* and *behaviours* instead of individuals, and offering suggestions for improvement. Receiving feedback requires the ability to listen well, ask for clarification if the comment is unclear, and being open to change and to other ideas[4].
   - There are many ways to revise papers in collaborative writing. Think through the strengths of your group members and choose a system that will work for your needs.

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[4] Adapted from https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/catalogs/tip-sheets/teamwork-skills-being-effective-group-member
[5] Adapted from The University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Centre: https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/process/collaborative-and-group-writing/

Person A writes a section

1) Person B gives suggestions for revision on this section
2) Person A edits the section based on these suggestions

or

1) Person A writes a section
2) The entire team meets and gives suggestions for revision on this section
3) Person B edits the section based on these suggestions

- Proofreading: Check for typos, spelling errors, punctuation problems, formatting issues, and grammatical mistakes.

💡 *Remember that everyone has a different writing style! The most important thing is that sentences are clear and concise.*

APPENDIX B: Capstone Proposal Template

TITLE/Student Name(s)	
Description of Problem	
Project Significance	
Social Value or Impact	
Purpose and Goal(s) of the Project	
Theoretical Framework or Conceptual Model Used in the Development of The Project	
Describe What the Project Will Be	
References	

APPENDIX C: Capstone Paper Template (Tips in Side-Bar)

TITLE OF CAPSTONE PAPER

by

STUDENTS'/STUDENT'S FULL NAME

(List alphabetically)

Prior degree, institution, year (List chronologically)

A CAPSTONE PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING

or

MASTER OF NURSING – NURSE PRACTITIONER

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(School of Nursing)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver, B.C.

Month/Year

© All authors/student name(s) in the group, Year

Abstract

Abstracts are limited to no more than 250 words. An abstract should be written as a single paragraph without indentation of the first line (the remainder of paragraphs in your paper should be indented). The abstract goes on its on page after the title page (always on page 2).

An effective abstract includes:

- One well-developed paragraph, which is unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone.
- An introduction-body-conclusion structure in which the parts of the report are discussed in order: purpose, findings, conclusions, what your capstone was and recommendations
- Follows strictly the chronology of the report
- Provides logical connections between material included
- Adds no new information but simply summarizes the report
- Is intelligible to a wide audience
- Written in past tense
- No abbreviations or references

Keywords: these are words, phrases, or acronyms that describe the most important elements of your paper. Provide 3-5 keywords. Write the word "*Keywords*" (in italics) one line below the abstract, indented 0.5", following by the keywords in lowercase, separated by commas.

Commented [A2]: Tips for writing an effective abstract can be found here: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/technical_reports_and_report_abstracts/index.html

Contents

Commented [A3]: For the table of contents, Include all level 1 and level 2 headings (other levels are optional). Indicate different heading levels with indents. Adhere to general APA format in terms of font, spacing, etc.

You can automatically create the table of contents by applying APA heading styles in Microsoft Word: https://www.scribbr.com/apa-style/apa-table-of-contents/.

Do not include the abstract in the table of contents.

Title of Capstone Paper

This is an electronic template for papers written in APA style (American Psychological Association, 2020), 7th edition Professional Paper. The purpose of the template is to help the student set the margins and spacing. Margins are set at 1 inch for top, bottom, left, and right. The type is left-justified only: that means the left margin is straight, but the right margin is ragged. Each paragraph is indented five spaces (0.5". It is best to use the tab key to indent. The line spacing is double throughout the paper, even on the reference page. Do not add extra space between paragraphs. One space is used after punctuation at the end of sentences. The font style used in this template is Times New Roman and the font size is 12. It is acceptable to use the first person ("I" statements) when describing the work you did as part of your capstone and when expressing your own views.

As in the proposal, the introduction of the paper should set the stage for the capstone by providing a brief overview of the topic and rationale. The introduction lays out what is to come in the rest of your paper. Think of it like a "road map" of your paper so the reader knows what is to come. **The introduction should include a purpose statement at or near the beginning.** It is helpful to begin the statement this way: "The purpose of this capstone paper is to**…"** After clearly articulating the problem or topic, the introduction should provide sufficient background information so the reader can understand what follows.

Description of the Problem and Significance

This section should elaborate on the statement of the problem (or gap) presented in the introduction. Thoroughly describe the nature of the problem; including a rationale for believing the problem exists. Describe how the capstone will address the problem and clearly state the goals and scope of the capstone paper. These goals must align with the literature review and the

methodology.

Synthesis of Literature

   The literature review should support the need for and evidence to support your proposed capstone. The literature review should be a greatly expanded version of the one written for the proposal. It should both summarize and _synthesize_ the relevant literature. **It is not a list describing or summarizing one piece of literature after another.** It should include a _minimum_ of 15 references that are fairly current. The majority of the literature reviewed should have been published within the last 10 years, and come from peer-reviewed journals. Edited texts or textbooks may also be appropriate source material. Web sites should be used with caution.

   In-text citations follow the author-date citation structure (e.g. Jones, 2018). For works with two authors, name both authors in the signal phrase, using the word "and" between the authors' names within the text, and use the ampersand "&" when using parentheses. For a work by three or more authors, list only the first author's name followed by "et al." in every citation, Use the past tense or present perfect tense for signal phrases that occur in the literature review and procedure descriptions (for example, "Jones (2015) **found"** or "Jones (2015) **has found**...").

   You may use tables and figures to present large amounts of information efficiently. Tables usually show numerical values, while a figure may be a chart, graph, photograph, drawing, or other illustration. Ask yourself this question first: Is the table or figure necessary? For example, it is better to present simple descriptive statistics in the text, not in a table. Tables and figures can be embedded within the text or on separate pages after the reference list (labelled as an Appendix, see below).

Second Level Heading

   The heading above would be used if you want to have your paper divided into sections

based on content. Using subheadings help to organize the relevant supporting evidence for your capstone paper. The heading should be a short descriptor of the section.

Third Level Heading

The subheading above would be used if there are several sections within the topic labeled in a heading. The subheading is flush left, italicized and bolded, with each word of four letters or more capitalized.

Fourth level subheading. Text begins on the same line. APA dictates that you should avoid having only one subsection heading and subsection within a section. In other words, use at least two subheadings under a main heading, or do not use any at all.

When you are ready to write, and after having read these instructions completely, you can delete these directions ("Review → "Delete" → "Delete all comments in Document") and start typing! The formatting should stay the same. However, one item that you will have to change is the page header, which is placed at the top of each page along with the page number. The words included in the page header should be reflective of the title of your paper, so that if the pages are intermixed with other papers, they will be identifiable.

The APA 7th Edition manual also discusses the desired tone of writing, grammar, punctuation, formatting for numbers, and a variety of other important topics. Although the APA style rules are used in this template, the purpose of the template is only to demonstrate spacing and the general parts of the paper. Please refer to the APA manual for other format directions.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

Conceptual or theoretical frameworks help to guide the topic, concepts, theories or models into existing knowledge. Explain the conceptual model or theory being used as the

Commented [A11]: *Third level headings are flush left, **bolded**, written in title case, and italicized.*

Commented [A12]: Fourth-level headings are **bolded**, written in title case, and punctuated with a period. They are also indented and written in-line with the following paragraph.

framework for the capstone paper and *how* the model/framework is being used to guide your capstone. The chosen theoretical or conceptual framework should help to explain the capstone and to analyze the meaning of the findings from the literature. The conceptual framework serves as a roadmap to the capstone paper and shows how the important elements are connected. You may want to develop a diagram of your theoretical framework and include it in an appendix. When writing the capstone paper, be sure to describe in detail *what you did* to address the problem or question and reflect on what your work added relative to the significance of the topic. Describe *how you used the literature and the conceptual framework* in the development of the paper.

Discussion & Implications

This discussion should briefly recap the purpose of the capstone paper, as well as summarize and contextualize the major findings/outcomes from the literature review. This is the "so what?" part of the paper - the place where you explain *why* the outcome matters. What is the potential impact of the capstone findings, what are its limitations, what have you learned, and what are the next steps? What are your recommendations and key discussion points for advanced nursing practice across diverse roles? (e.g. education, research, primary health care, policy, nurse practitioner practice)

Knowledge Translation (KT): Sharing the Capstone

Based on the type of work undertaken for the capstone, you are encouraged to include discussion of how you will share the results; i.e. what was learned, created or found. All capstones that include a KT appendix or discussion will strengthen the overall grade. For example, your conclusions might propose an intervention for a specific population and/or health care context, or the capstone might culminate in a conference presentation, educational toolkit, or policy change

recommendations.

Conclusion

Conclusions wrap up what you have been discussing in your paper. After moving from general to specific information in the introduction and body paragraphs, your conclusion should begin pulling back into more general information that restates the main points of your argument. Conclusions may also call for action or overview future possible quality improvement and research.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What conclusions did you reach because of development of your capstone paper?

- State any recommendations you have related to your capstone paper, i.e., what would you recommend if the capstone paper were implemented?

- How could some of the barriers be addressed or overcome?

- What recommendations do you have for studying this issue in the future?

References

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, *volume number*(issue number), pages. https://doi.org/xx.xxx/yyyy

Lastname, F. M. (Year, Month Date). *Title of page*. Site name. URL