

UNK General Studies Program Course Submission Guidelines for Capstone Courses

This document describes the process, guidelines and submission procedure used in evaluating Capstone course proposals for inclusion in UNK's General Studies program.

Course Approval Process

Course proposals are submitted electronically (in Word format) to the Director of General Studies (general.studies@unk.edu). Course proposals are presented to the GSC at a regularly scheduled meeting. If the course meets established criteria, then the Council will vote to disseminate the proposal to campus; if not, the Council can either reject the proposal or return the proposal for revision and resubmission for consideration at the next scheduled GSC meeting. Upon approval, the Director of General Studies disseminates the proposal for campus comments for a minimum of two weeks. The Council will vote on the proposal at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Council's decision will be forwarded to the SVCASA for final approval. Approved capstone courses may be offered in the next term after receiving full approval from the GSC and SVCASA.

Note, the course approval process takes time. Making sure submitted proposals are complete and allowing adequate time for necessary revisions can facilitate the process.

Faculty are strongly encouraged to meet with a General Studies Council representative during the preparation of their course proposal. Faculty must meet with a General Studies Council representative prior to submitting the proposal for consideration.

The GSC will follow the Guidelines below in reviewing each GS course proposal to determine the extent to which the proposed course addresses the required Capstone learning outcomes. The primary learning outcome and purpose of the Capstone course is for students to integrate information and synthesize new knowledge.

Following is information about Capstone courses to assist faculty in creating course proposals. Included here are the rationale, learning outcomes, and course criteria and policies.

Rationale

The Capstone is an interdisciplinary experience that culminates the student's General Studies experience. In this course, learners apply all the knowledge, cognitive abilities, and communication skills they have gained from General Studies in designing and completing an original project or paper. A Capstone course integrates *at least two different academic* disciplines – that of the instructor plus one other not closely-related discipline¹. This interdisciplinary focus gives students the challenge of employing different methodologies, integrating knowledge, and synthesizing their results.

Required Learning Outcomes

Required Capstone Learning Outcomes to be included as course objectives in each syllabus:

On completing the Capstone, students can

- 1) Evaluate information from more than one academic discipline.
- 2) Formulate logical connections between disciplines as they relate to the topic.

¹ This ordinarily means disciplines from two separate departments. The GSC will also consider proposals of capstones whose integrated disciplines are not closely related, but which are housed in the same administrative department at UNK and/or are disciplines not currently offered at UNK.

- 3) Employ the approach of more than one academic discipline in completing a Capstone project.
- 4) Synthesize knowledge related to the topic in completing a Capstone project.
- 5) Communicate effectively in the medium chosen for the Capstone project.

In addition, the Capstone must address one or more of the following GS program level outcomes and include them as course objectives in each syllabus:

The Capstone develops the learner's ability to

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) Communicate effectively in spoken form.
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Course Policies

Capstone courses:

- 1) Include an interdisciplinary focus and critical thinking.
- 2) Require students to *synthesize ideas from the disciplines used in the course*.
- 3) Require the creation of an original semester project or paper. The capstone project and/or assignments directly related to the project must account for at least 50% of the semester grade.
- 4) Use Capstone learning outcomes set by General Studies Council.
- 5) Include assessment of learning outcomes in each Capstone course that will be conducted using the GSC approved rubric to evaluate the original project or paper for the course.
- 6) Are open to juniors and seniors (and to students within 6 hours of completion of their General Studies program).
- 7) A course may be either a GS capstone OR a major/minor course, but not both.
- 8) Students may take any course numbered 388 in any department to satisfy the capstone requirement irrespective of their major / minor.
- 9) Departments cannot require students to take any particular Capstone; students may choose which Capstone to take and in which discipline to take it. Students are encouraged to take the Capstone course in a discipline other than their major or minor.

Submission Procedure

Course proposals consist of three parts: **Part 1:** Capstone Course Proposal Checklist; **Part 2:** Course Information; and **Part 3:** Course Syllabus. *Course proposals must be reviewed by a college representative to the GSC prior to submission.* Completed proposals are submitted electronically (in Word format) to the General Studies Office (general.studies@unk.edu); proposals that are incomplete will be returned to the author.

NOTE: Course prefixes with an existing Capstone (388) course do not need to enter subsequent Capstone topics in the in the online course approval system. It comes only to the General Studies Council for approval. However, some colleges require that proposed new Capstone topics be approved at the college level. Consult the dean's office of your college for further guidance.

Faculty should use the Course Proposal Checklist as a guide to ensure their proposal includes all requested information and that information is complete; the completed checklist – signed by GSC representative - must be submitted with Parts 2 and 3 of the proposal.

Part 1: Capstone Course Proposal Checklist

Course Information (Part 2). Proposal includes requested information and information is complete:	Y	N
A. Basic course information (course title and number, instructor, contact information)		
B. Type of capstone course (new or existing)		
C. GS Program level learning outcomes identified Evidence presented on how those learning outcomes will be achieved		
D. Capstone learning outcomes identified Evidence presented on how those learning outcomes will be achieved		
Course Syllabus (Part 3)	Y	N
Syllabus submitted		
Syllabus includes purpose statements (General Studies and Capstone)		
Syllabus identifies Capstone learning outcomes and which Program Level learning outcomes are addressed in the course		
Syllabus identifies how achievement of those learning outcomes will be demonstrated through course activities.		
Syllabus complete and includes all requested information in the specified order.		
GSC Representative reviewing proposal:		
Name (please print):		
Signature:		

Part 2: Course Information

- A. Indicate:
- Capstone title
 - Course number: All Capstones are numbered 388. Distinctions can be made between them within a given department by using section numbers.
 - Department proposing the topic
 - Contact person
- B. Indicate if the proposed course is:
- The first capstone course offered by the Department or for the course prefix (note – first time capstones must go through the formal Academic Affairs process and entered in the online course approval system.); or

A subsequent capstone course offered by the Department or for the course prefix.

- C. Indicate which PROGRAM-LEVEL learning outcome(s) will be reinforced by this course. A minimum of one program-level outcome must be addressed by the course and these outcomes should be clearly reflected in the course syllabus as objectives for the course.

PROGRAM-LEVEL OUTCOMES (GS courses must meet at least one program-level outcome)

Students can:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) Communicate effectively in spoken form.
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Explain clearly how the course meets the stated program-level learning outcomes and how achievement of those outcomes will be demonstrated. In other words, describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course offers the students to:

- 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the GS program-level outcomes

and

- 2) Demonstrate achievement of the GS program-level outcomes.

- D. Indicate how the following Capstone learning outcomes will be met by this course:

On completing the Capstone, students can

- 1) Evaluate information from more than one academic discipline.
- 2) Formulate logical connections between disciplines as they relate to the topic.
- 3) Employ the approach of more than one academic discipline in completing a Capstone project.
- 4) Synthesize knowledge related to the topic in completing a Capstone project.
- 5) Communicate effectively in the medium chosen for the Capstone project.

These outcomes should be clearly reflected in the course syllabus as objectives for the course. Explain clearly and briefly how the course meets these Capstone learning outcomes and how achievement of

those outcomes will be demonstrated. In other words, describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course offers the students to:

- 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the capstone outcomes
- and**
- 2) Demonstrate achievement of the capstone outcomes.

In its review of Capstone course proposals, the General Studies Council will consider the following questions:

- Does the course include at least one or more of the GS program level learning outcomes as objectives for the course and is it reflected in the course syllabus?
- Does the course clearly address the approved GS Capstone learning outcomes and list those outcomes in the syllabus as being part of the objectives for the course?
- Does the course clearly identify what disciplines are being covered and is it reflected in the syllabus?
- Does the topic and course integrate critical perspectives of more than one discipline and are those disciplines reflected pervasively throughout the syllabus through readings and assignments?
- Does the course critically evaluate how knowledge from the selected (or identified) disciplines contributes to the Capstone project?
- Does the syllabus show that at least 50% of the semester grade is based on assignments directly related to the Capstone project?
- Does the course provide students opportunities to develop the knowledge/skills necessary for successful achievement of the Capstone learning outcomes and identify those opportunities in the syllabus?
- Does the course provide students with opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and reflect those opportunities in the syllabus?
- Does the syllabus clearly identify the Capstone project and how it will demonstrate achievement of the stated learning outcomes? In other words, does the syllabus clearly identify the basic framework for the Capstone project, what it is trying to achieve, and how the GS approved Capstone rubric will be used in the evaluation of students' demonstrating achievement of stated learning outcomes.
- Does the syllabus include all of the requested items in the specified order?

Part 3: Course Syllabus All syllabi should follow the template provided below; syllabi may include additional information but the following must be provided at a minimum.

All syllabi must include the following information ***in the order listed***:

- a) Course Title
- b) Course prefix, number, and section
- c) Instructor Name
- d) Instructor office location and office hours
- e) Instructor phone number and email address
- f) Office hours
- g) Required text / course readings (identify required textbooks, readings, viewings, or other course material; are these materials to be purchased or will they be available on Canvas?)
- h) Course Prerequisites
- i) Statement identifying that the course is a General Studies course (identify area and type of course, e.g., MUS 388 is a General Studies Capstone course)
- j) Purpose statement for General Studies (*see Appendix A*)
- k) Purpose statement for capstone courses (*see Appendix A*)
- l) Course description (for the capstone course being proposed)
- m) Course objectives (brief explanation of objectives of the course, including an overall learning objective for the course)
- n) Indicate which GS PROGRAM-LEVEL learning outcome(s) will be reinforced by this course. Explain clearly and briefly how the course meets the stated program-level learning outcomes and describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course provides students to:
 - 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the GS program-level outcomes

and

 - 2) Demonstrate achievement of those GS program-level outcomes.
- o) Indicate the Capstone learning outcomes. Explain clearly and briefly how the course meets the capstone learning outcomes and describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course provides students to:
 - 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the capstone outcomes

and

 - 2) Demonstrate achievement of those capstone outcomes
- p) Course outline / format (e.g., lecture laboratory, discussion, etc.)
- q) General grading criteria and weighting for all course projects and other forms of student assessment. (A complete description of each individual assignment is not necessary. However, students need to have a general understanding of the work requirements for the course (e.g. a 3 page paper every 2 weeks; a meaningful paragraph at the beginning of each class, etc.) and how these will be graded (e.g. graded on mechanics and content or graded solely on content, etc.). Students also need to be able to understand which projects carry more, or less, weight in regards to the final grade.)
- r) Grading scale for the determination of final course grades, including how many points or what percentage is required for each letter grade.
- s) Course policy / expectations on academic honesty / integrity, attendance, class participation, email communications, and conduct.
- t) UNK's Academic Dishonesty policy
- u) University statement on disabilities and those who are pregnant
- v) University statement on reporting student sexual harassment, sexual violence or sexual assault.

Optional information that may be included:

- w) Policy on extra credit
- x) Tentative course schedule, including due dates for major assignments or dates of major examinations. (It is recognized that course dates will change from semester to semester and year to year, but if there is a major project due every 3 weeks and an examination during the middle of the semester and during finals week, these need to be indicated.)

Appendix A: Purpose Statements (GSC approved 4/2017)

Purpose of General Studies: The UNK General Studies program helps students acquire knowledge and abilities; to understand the world; to make connections across disciplines; and to solve contemporary problems. The GS program is intentionally structured to allow students to build necessary skills in the Foundational Core classes while making the transition to college level coursework and forming critical thinking skills in the Portal class. Students then explore a broad cross-section of academic topics in the Distribution Area and finally finish their GS program in the Capstone course that is designed to help students synthesize, through interdisciplinary instruction, their knowledge, skills, and experiences across the curriculum.

Purpose of the Capstone Course: The GS Capstone course serves as the culminating experience in the GS Program allowing students to participate in an interdisciplinary course requiring students to use their critical thinking skills developed from the beginning of the GS program in the Foundational Core, strengthened in the Portal course, and broadened in the Distribution Area.