This course supports the assessment for MS, Information Technology Management Capstone Oral Defense. The course covers 5 competencies and represents 3 competency units.

**Introduction**

**Overview**
The Capstone culminates your master's degree program at Western Governors University. This course is your guide to successfully completing the Capstone Project. It explains what the Capstone is and outlines its essential parts.

When you are ready to begin working on it, you will be assigned to a Capstone course instructor. This will be an Assessment faculty member with the expertise necessary to guide and advise you as you complete each step of the process. Before beginning work, please meet with your course instructor to review this course and to make sure you understand the expectations and requirements associated with the Capstone Project in your degree program.

All WGU master's degree programs include a very substantial culminating Capstone Project, consisting of both a written project and defense recorded video presentation based on it. The purpose of such a project is to allow you to demonstrate the application of the academic and professional abilities you have developed as a graduate student. While Capstone requirements differ by program, the expectations for quality are the same across all programs. The Capstone challenges you to bring forth and display the best work of which you are capable.

The Capstone Project is your chance to set the bar. Whether you do something to satisfy your own curiosity or tackle something of interest to another, this is your work, and you must take ownership of it. You should experience pleasure and pride as you watch your abilities unfold, learning from your own endeavors and the advice of your course instructor. Set the bar high so that at the end of it all, you will know satisfaction, avoiding the feeling that you could have done better.

**Competencies**

This course provides guidance to help you demonstrate the following 5 competencies:

- **Competency 438.1.2: Audience Analysis**
  The graduate conducts an audience analysis to determine effective and persuasive communication strategies.

- **Competency 438.1.4: Document Design Principles**
  The graduate develops technical communications that accurately incorporate relevant document design principles.

- **Competency 438.1.5: Clarity**
  The graduate presents technical data according to appropriate principles of clarity and conciseness.
- **Competency 438.1.7: Logic**
  The graduate presents technical data using appropriate principles of logic.

- **Competency 438.1.8: Grammar and Usage**
  The graduate applies appropriate grammar and usage principles in technical communication documents.

**Course Instructor Assistance**

As you prepare to successfully demonstrate competency in this subject, remember that course instructors stand ready to help you reach your educational goals. As subject matter experts, mentors enjoy and take pride in helping students become reflective learners, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. Course instructors are excited to hear from you and eager to work with you.

Successful students report that working with a course instructor is the key to their success. Course instructors are able to share tips on approaches, tools, and skills that can help you apply the content you're studying. They also provide guidance in assessment preparation strategies and troubleshoot areas of deficiency. Even if things don't work out on your first try, course instructors act as a support system to help you prepare for another attempt. You should expect to work with course instructors for the duration of your coursework, and you are encouraged to contact them as soon as you begin. Course instructors are fully committed to your success!

**Preparing for Success**

The information in this section is provided to detail the resources available for you to use as you complete this course.

**Learning Resources**

The learning resources listed in this section are required to complete the activities in this course. For many resources, WGU has provided automatic access through the course. However, you may need to manually enroll in or independently acquire other resources. Read the full instructions provided to ensure that you have access to all of your resources in a timely manner.

**The WGU Library**

As part of the Capstone, you must assemble relevant articles, documents, and books related to your project. The books and full-text articles housed at the WGU Library are a good place to obtain that information.

The [WGU Library](https://wgu.edu/library) is available online to WGU students 24 hours a day.

For more information about using the WGU Library, view the following videos on [The WGU Channel](https://www.youtube.com/wgu):

- [WGU: Accessing the Library](https://www.youtube.com/wgu)
- [WGU Library: Finding Articles, Books, & E-Reserves](https://www.youtube.com/wgu)
Your Capstone Journey

All of the assessments in your program, have lead up to the Capstone; throughout the program you have developed the competency required for a successful Capstone Project.

Depending upon your specific program requirements, you may even include some of your prior work in the composition of your project. Please keep in mind, however, that the rigorous standards for Capstone Projects may require you to revise and improve such work, perhaps even significantly. Schedule a conference with your Capstone course instructor to discuss the process.

Good Writing and the Capstone

Capstone work is an iterative process that depends on technical writing skills and effective use of APA style and formatting.

Please bear in mind that your Capstone is the culminating project of your degree program. When archived, its artifacts will be published in the Comprehensive Capstone archive. This archive can be accessed by students, faculty, administrators, and accreditors; therefore, it should represent your best writing.

To help you meet a high standard of quality work, WGU has prepared a Capstone Template. You may also want to have a competent writer proofread your work prior to submitting it in TaskStream, and you should allow for the possibility that one or more revisions will be required.

In this regard, as noted above, please keep in mind that, because your course instructor will require adequate time to review each submission (the standard turn-around time is three business days for each submission), the completion of your project may take longer than you anticipate at the outset. If your project shows evidence of poor general writing skills, your facilitator may refer you to the WGU Center for Writing Excellence (see above in the Additional Resources section of this course).

Note: The 6th edition of the APA Publication Manual should be your ultimate reference. An excellent resource for the most up-to-date APA formatting requirements is the Purdue Online Writing Lab: APA Style web page.

The Capstone Archives

Western Governors University (WGU) has developed Capstone Archives to display final Capstone written work and presentations. When WGU archives your final Capstone documents, these documents will be made available to current students, mentors, and evaluators after you have graduated. You will be able to determine whether you wish to participate in the Capstone Archive by completing a copy of the Capstone Waiver and Release Form at the conclusion of your Capstone Oral Defense Task. By participating, your scholarship and effort at WGU will be recognized, and you will have the satisfaction of contributing to the advancement of WGU and its students.

Since your final Capstone Project will be shared with the WGU academic community, you should make sure it represents your best work—rigorous scholarship, research, and pedagogy.
WGU has taken great care to ensure that safeguards are in place to guard the academic authenticity and the exposure of sensitive information.

When you submit the Capstone release statement, you agree to voluntarily remove confidential information. This includes not only your own personal details and contact information, but also information identifying co-workers, organizations, etc. and their contact information. Read the Capstone Security and Anonymity document for more information about how your final Capstone documents are protected in the Archive.

You will want to go to the Model Capstone Archive to see examples of competent student work in your own program that represent some variety in the way students approach project requirements. Some of the materials are artifacts produced along the way to the final Capstone materials so you can see what is involved during the process you are about to undertake.

You can also search the Capstone Excellence Award Archive to examine the final artifacts from capstones across the University that may be relevant to topics in which you are interested.

The IRB Process
Capstone projects at Western Governors University are subject to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. There are two aspects of this that may (or may not) be required, depending on the project you undertake. Your Capstone course instructor can direct you as you work through the proposal portion of the Capstone.

Employer Verification Form

If you are using a project related to your work for your organization as your Capstone Project, you will need to fill out the Employee Verification Form.

Informed Consent Form

You must have each person you interview or from whom you collect data (survey or observations) complete a copy of the Informed Consent Form.

Each must give voluntary consent to participate, knowing the purpose, risks, and benefits of your project. The form explains that the person’s identity will remain anonymous and that withdrawal is possible at any time.

If your project is related to your place of work or necessitates obtaining informed consent, complete the “Employer Verification” and/or “Informed Consent” forms and submit them to your facilitator along with your prospectus.

In the rare case that there are human subjects or other issues associated with your project, the facilitator may need to consult with WGU management and have your project and applicable forms reviewed by the entire Institutional Review Board at its regular or a special meeting. Approval is necessary before you can proceed on the parts of your project involving your workplace or gathering data from project participants.

The Proposal
The proposal must sell your research; often a sound, much needed project can fail to happen if the proposal is not right. Remember to write with a professional demeanor, ask yourself relevant questions to fully comprehend the potential scope of your project, and make sure it is grammatically sound.

**Coming up With an Idea**

One of the most difficult parts of putting together your Capstone is coming up with your initial idea. If you have experience in IT management, it is likely that you have already completed some substantial projects at work.

When brainstorming, think in terms of what types of projects you might be asked to complete as an IT management professional, or, what emerging trends are being investigated that have to do with IT management.

What is your area of interest? Is it policy, security, wireless networks, disaster recovery, technological globalization? Think about your area of interest in conjunction with what type of project might be worthy of a Capstone. This will help you devise what you want to accomplish with your Capstone.

**Formatting and Organizational Style**

Remember that your prospectus is a proposal (i.e., the project has not yet taken place); thus, make sure your writing is in future tense. APA is the standard format of the American Psychological Association.

APA is used by most college and university departments, including the WGU College of Information Technology, to guide students and faculty in consistently formatted work. An APA Template is available from the Course Instructor. The template provides the format, headings, and content aspects of both the Proposal and the Written Capstone. Consult the APA Style manual or the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.purdue.edu) for additional assistance with correct citation and articulation.

As you review your proposal, be sure to check the following items:

- overall structure is well organized and logical
- grammar is correct, including tense
- sentence structure is clear
- punctuation and spelling are correct

**Recorded Video Presentation**

Congratulations on completing your written Capstone Project!

It is now time to work on your recorded video presentation.

You should tie it to the development of your project, describe the methodologies or strategies you used, describe the results of your project, summarize your conclusions, and describe strengths and weaknesses of your project. The actual task prompts can be seen in the subsequent section (First Steps). Consult your assigned Capstone course instructor if you have any questions or concerns.
The Capstone requires that you write academically at the graduate level, adhering to APA and articulation standards. Your Capstone is the culminating project of your degree program. Once your project is archived, it's artifacts will become viewable to other students, faculty, administrators, and accreditors; thus, you should make sure it represents your best work.

Even though APA won't be central to developing a multimedia presentation and it's oral defense, you should still remember to use APA citations and formatting as much as possible as you prepare these items.

**Preparing the Multimedia Presentation**

The multimedia presentation of your Capstone Project should be comprised of 15 to 25 slides. Align your slides as closely as possible to the evaluation rubric.

Initially, it would be appropriate to present an overview of your IT management project. Explain the process you went through to develop your project and it's appropriateness in the IT management field. Discuss your methodologies or special strategies used that led to your results.

Other elements to include could be obstacles you encountered as part of the Capstone process and strategies that you used to overcome them. Include the ways you addressed validity and reliability. Format your slides consistently.

The less-is-more principle applies to the content of your slides. Content should be limited to significant bulleted items that will be expanded upon during your discussion. The use of images including charts, graphs, and tables can be effective tools during the discussion of your findings.

The entire oral defense should take less than an hour. The presentation of the slideshow is typically completed within 40 minutes. The remaining 20 minutes consists of Capstone evaluator observations and questions and your responses to those questions.

Review the task instructions, rubric, and Panopto support videos for detailed requirements.

**Final Steps**

Congratulations on completing the activities in this course! You are now prepared to complete the associated assessment. If you have not already been directed to complete it, schedule and complete the assessment now.