This course of study outlines the sequence of learning activities to help you complete the tasks for the business graduate capstone. This course of study can take up to seven weeks to complete depending on your educational background, work experience, and the time you are able to dedicate to your studies. Following this document sequentially is an important part of your assessment preparation. This tool is designed to help you become an independent learner by providing multiple learning methods. Consult with your mentor if you wish to accelerate your progress through this course of study.

**Introduction**

Welcome to the Business Graduate Capstone course of study! Certainly in today's business environment, you need to plan and establish goals for a career path and take steps toward achieving those goals -- which is just what you are going to explore.

**Why a Business Graduate Capstone?**

The business graduate capstone is a performance assessment that requires students to research and analyze a career path; reflect and evaluate personal levels of business competence; develop a learning plan for gaining additional competence; and create a professional network. Completing the business graduate capstone -- the next step in the process toward completing your MBA degree -- will help you think about your current competencies, how they have grown through the completion of your degree program, and how to apply them in the job market.

This course of study is designed to prepare you to complete the business graduate capstone. You have likely experienced some sort of growth in your career and may have done a personal assessment of strengths and desired direction relative to your career path. Now is your opportunity to start that process if you have not yet done so or to reflect, enhance, and plan for continued growth in your career. Once you complete this course of study, you will have developed a plan that you can immediately use in your work and career pursuit.

**Competencies**

The business graduate capstone is a culminating assessment that incorporates many of the competencies previously addressed in the MBA program and includes the following:

**Competency: Capstone**

The graduate integrates and synthesizes competencies from across the degree program and thereby demonstrates the ability to participate in and contribute value to the chosen professional field.

**Recommended Learning Resources**

- SkillSoft
- Substantial Web Documents
Preparing for Success

In order to successfully complete the business graduate capstone, you need the appropriate resources to support your learning. The various learning resources included in this course of study are essential to your success, as they will provide the necessary knowledge to complete the required tasks.

Acquire Learning Resources

Arrange to obtain the learning resources listed in the "Required Learning Resources" section so there will be no delays in your studies. These items are essential for you, as this document will guide you in the use of these materials. Some of these items must be shipped to you, so be sure that your mailing address information is current. If you click your name on your Degree Plan, you can check your contact information.

Automatically Enrolled Resources

You will be automatically enrolled at the activity level for the following learning resources. Simply click on the links provided in the activities to access the learning materials.

Note: If the preceding resources appear in your "Learning Resources" tab, DO NOT click "Show
Sections” or “Enroll Now.” If you have already done so, contact your course instructor.

Access the SkillSoft Library

The SkillSoft Library contains modules listed throughout the course of study that will assist you in preparing for the assessment. New students are automatically enrolled in SkillSoft during EWB. For additional information on using your SkillSoft account, talk to your mentor or read the “Using Your SkillSoft Account” document found on your Degree Plan under "Additional Learning Resources."

How to use SkillSoft modules:

1. Read the SkillSoft lesson overview.
2. Take the SkillSoft course pre-test for each section where available.
3. Complete the modules where your pre-test scores are low.
4. Take the post-tests after completing all of the modules.
5. For additional information, review the SkillBriefs, Job Aids, and Books24x7 associated with each module.

After logging in to SkillSoft, you will be able to access the following modules, which are listed throughout the course of study:

- Team_01_a02_bs_ensus: Leading High-Performance On-Site Teams
- TEAM001A: Creating Virtual and High-Performance Teams Simulation
- mgmt_08_a03 bs_ensus: Facilitating Meetings and Work Groups
- mgmt_02_a01 bs_ensus: Managing in a Global Business Environment
- MKT0231: Competitive Strategies for a Global Marketplace
- MGMT0112: Management Competency Model
- Mgmt_10_a05 bs_ensus: Achieving Success: The Help of a Mentor
- LEAD0132: Building Your Support System
- CONS0115: Evaluation and Review
- PD0181: Finding Your Life Balance
- KNOW0113: The Potential of Self-Directed Learning
- PD0265: Creating Your Learning Strategy

Access the WGU Library

This course of study utilizes resources located in the WGU Library E-Reserves, with articles available for you to download. Follow these directions for accessing the WGU Library E-Reserves.

Participate in the Course of Study Message Board

The message boards are an important part of the WGUU experience. In the lower right-hand corner of the course of study screen there is a message board area. Throughout your studies, you will want to follow the questions, observations, and responses of the other students and the expert advice of the course instructor. If you have questions of your own, do not hesitate to use this resource to get those answered as you develop your competencies.

Take Study Notes
As you engage in the activities throughout this course of study, you will be answering questions, completing exercises, and sketching out concepts. You have the ability to take these notes online through the web-enabled course of study. A notebook or study journal (either paper or electronic) makes your learning more active. It also provides an excellent source of important materials to review prior to demonstrating your competence through the assessment.

**Discuss TaskStream Enrollment**

**URLs:**

**TaskStream**
http://www.taskstream.com

**TaskStream Help Document**
http://www.wgu.edu/wgu/student/taskstream_documents.asp

Through this course of study, you will need to complete performance assessments in TaskStream. In order to obtain the instructions for each task and to submit your work, you will need to be enrolled in TaskStream. Additional information on TaskStream can be found in the Student Portal on the "Resources" tab at the bottom of the page. Look for the "TaskStream Help" link. Contact your mentor to go over these TaskStream processes and requirements.

Read through the TaskStream help document available at the website listed above. To access the assessment, follow these steps:

1. Log in to your MyWGU Student Portal.
2. Go to the "My Degree Plan" tab.
3. In the list below "Course Details," find the assessment you are working on.
4. In the "Assessment Scheduled Date" column, click "Schedule Now."
5. A new window will come up. If there are other considerations you would like to inform the Assessment Delivery Team about, discuss them in the "Other Considerations" box that appears and then click "Continue." If not, simply click "Continue."
6. A request will be sent to your mentor for approval.
7. Once your mentor has approved your request, our Assessment Delivery Team will open the tasks required for the assessment in TaskStream. You will log in to TaskStream to receive the instructions, see the rubric, and submit your assessment for grading.

**Review the Performance Assessment**

In order to effectively prepare you for the business graduate capstone assessment, this course of study has been divided into activities consistent with the assessment. However, it is important to take special notice of the overlap between the sections. The four major sections contained within this course of study are:

1. Research Component
2. Evaluation of Competencies
3. Competency Development Plan
4. Professional Networking
As you move through this course of study, remember that this is just the beginning of a lifelong pursuit. Focus on understanding the concepts and connecting them to your future career path. Obtain the appropriate resources and take the necessary time to study them.

**Research Component, Part I**

This section will help you begin to think about your career path as you prepare to write your research paper for submission in TaskStream. There are a variety of career paths available to an MBA graduate, and honing in on those that directly fit your professional goals is essential to your career success, since it allows you to focus on and develop characteristics and skills that a particular profession would require.

Understanding your career goals and the path to get there will help you prepare for the next steps in your career as you complete your MBA program. This section will help develop your understanding of the industry you have chosen, the long- and short-term prospects, and the requirements for someone pursuing that career path.

**Career Exploration**

Your career exploration includes resources from SkillSoft and interaction with your peers and the course instructor through the message board. Be sure to utilize each of these resources, as they provide a broad range of viewpoints on the topics you will need to master in order to pass the performance assessment.

When you have completed this section you should have

- identified a career path or professional objective,
- described the career path or objective,
- evaluated the short- and long-term career outlook, and
- analyzed the industry for your chosen career path (e.g., number and size of companies, competitive environment, external environment, economic outlook).

**Begin Industry and Career Research**

**URLs:**

- **Career Guide to Industries**
  http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/home.htm

- **Industry Information Resources**

- **Occupational Outlook Handbook**
  http://www.bls.gov/oco/

- **O*NET Online**
  http://www.bls.gov/oco/

- **United States Department of Labor Dictionary of Occupational Titles**
Review the websites listed above to begin exploration of industries and careers within the industries. Also, at the WGU Library, look for academic and industry journals, articles, and papers. Do an Internet search for industry-specific forums and groups.

**Research Component, Part II**

This section will help you develop your competencies for your TaskStream research paper. There are a variety of business and professional competencies that businesses today value. Those competencies are important to your success in marketing yourself as a valuable addition to a company. Understanding the areas that you need to focus on in your professional development is important to effective career search.

Understanding your career goals and the path to achieve them will help prepare you for the next steps in your career as you complete your MBA program. This section will develop your understanding of the industry you have chosen, the long- and short-term prospects, and the requirements for someone pursuing that career path.

**Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Evaluation**

When you have completed this section, you will have

- listed the educational or certification requirements and
- described the competencies needed in the seven skills, knowledge, and experience areas.

Industry is becoming much more particular in the qualifications necessary to enter and be successful in a specific business. Understanding the educational or certification requirements for a particular business or industry allows you to develop your skills and competencies to match the necessary requirements. The first step to developing those competencies is to understand what you need to develop or acquire to be successful.

**Review and Document Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Areas**

Complete the following SkillSoft activities for a thorough understanding of the seven skills, knowledge, and experience areas.
For an overview of Leading People and Teams competencies, review the following:

- **Module: team_01_a02_bs_enus: Leading High-Performance On-Site Teams**
- **Simulation: TEAM001A: Creating Virtual and High-Performance Teams Simulation**

For a review of Facilitating Meeting and Work Groups complete the following module.

- **Module: mgmt_08_a03_bs_enus_sbmrgmt_08_a03_bs_enus003001: Creating the Mindset for Sustainable Solutions**
- **Module: mgmt_08_a03_bs_enus: Facilitating Meetings and Work Groups**

For an overview of Serving Customers competencies, read chapter 1 of *Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service*.

For an overview of Managing Products and Services competencies, review the following modules and read chapter 8 of *Service Management and Marketing: Customer Management in Service Competition*.

- **Module: OPER0405: Processes for Quality Products and Services**
- **Module: MKT0241: Introduction to Product Management**

For an overview of Managing Technology and Innovation competencies, review the following and read chapters 1 and 3 from *Knowledge and Information Technology Management: Human and Social Perspectives*.

Module:

- **LEAD0124: Business and Technology Management Checklist**

For an overview of Assessing the Competitive Environment competencies, review the following:

- **Module: MKT0203: Competitive Factors in Strategic Marketing**

For an overview of Planning for the Future in the Global Marketplace competencies, review the following:

- **Module: mgmt_02_a01_bs_enus: Managing in a Global Business Environment**
- **Module: MKT0231: Competitive Strategies for a Global Marketplace**

**Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Identification**

**URL:** [http://www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)

Complete the first section of the career competencies table supplied with your TaskStream instructions.

After completing the review activities in the activity "Review and Document Skills, Knowledge,
and Experience Areas," you should now have a good understanding of what each area represents. Complete the "Competencies Required for Career Path" column of your table by identifying the competencies required for your chosen career path.

There are three categories listed in the worksheet: (1) bringing new products to market, (2) technical skills, and (3) other skills that are not required but may have relevance for the career path you have chosen.

**Research Component, Part III**

This section will help you pull everything together for your research paper. Your research paper will allow you to analyze and review the various industry characteristics, certifications, required skills, and sought-after competencies for the different career paths you are interested in. It will also help you evaluate your development of those skills and competencies.

Understanding your career goals and the path to get there will help you prepare for the next steps in your career as you complete your MBA program. This section will help develop your understanding of the industry you have chosen, the long- and short-term prospects, and the requirements for someone pursuing that career path.

**Research Paper**

When you have completed this section, you will have completed and submitted your research paper with attention to the following details:

- Your paper is 10-15 pages.
- Your paper includes 10 citations (at least five business articles, one book, and four other references).
- Your work contains generally effective sentence structure, solid vocabulary, and accurate word choice.
- Your work contains no minor or major errors (run a spelling and grammar check).
- Your work is extremely clear and easy to follow.

Now is your opportunity to demonstrate the competence you have developed as you write a research paper. Individuals who have the ability to assess their career outlook in relation to their long-term goals will be at an advantage in a difficult job market. This relevant exercise provides you the opportunity not only to demonstrate the competence you have gained but also to participate in a preparatory exercise for future career endeavors.

Your study of a particular industry or business has included resources from your textbook, corresponding websites, and the Graduate Business Capstone Message Board. Be sure to utilize each of these resources, as they provide a broad range of viewpoints on the topics you will need to understand in order to write the career outlook report for your business portfolio.

**Write and Review Paper for TaskStream Submission**

**URL:** [http://www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)

Complete the research paper task per the instructions in TaskStream.
When you have completed your research paper, self-score your tasks and review your work on each task using the scoring rubrics in TaskStream, which are the same rubrics the grader uses to score your task. Make sure that your work meets the minimum requirements set out by the scoring rubrics.

Submit Research Paper

**URL:** [http://www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)

Submit your research paper and partially-developed career competencies table in TaskStream to be evaluated.

After a few days, check on the status of your task. If the grader did not give you a passing grade for your task you can review, revise, and resubmit with corrections. If there are any areas where you do not understand a concept, please check with the course instructor for assistance. If you do not pass the assessment within two tries, you will need to have the course instructor’s approval to try again.

**Evaluation of Competencies, Part I**

This section will help you prepare the competency evaluation tasks for submission in TaskStream. Understanding your personal strengths is an important step in your development of the skills and competencies needed in the business or career path of your choice.

Understanding your competencies will help you prepare for the next steps in your career as you complete your MBA program. This section will develop your understanding of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the competencies required for your chosen career path.

**Analysis of Strengths and Competencies**

When you have completed this section, you will have analyzed your strengths and competencies relative to your prior learning or experience and the MBA competencies you have demonstrated. You will have

- identified career competencies;
- identified strength and weaknesses relative to all seven skills, knowledge, and experience areas; and
- identified 10 MBA competencies relative to all seven skills, knowledge, and experience areas.

Understanding your individual strengths will help you see how you and potential work and career possibilities match, and it will allow you to focus more clearly on career goals.

**Strengths Analysis**

Identify your strengths and weaknesses relative to the seven skills, knowledge, and experience areas.

Use the "Strengths Analysis" website to prepare your personal strengths analysis.
Complete the "Prior Learning or Experience" column in the career competencies worksheet.
MBA Competency Identification

Use the following SkillSoft resource to help you think through the competency evaluation:

- mgmt_04_a02_bs_enus_jmg0112b: Management Competency Model

For this task you need to select 10 competencies from your entire degree program, at least two of them from your degree specialty if you have one, that relate to the seven skills, knowledge, and experience areas identified.

Complete the "MBA Competencies" column in the career competencies worksheet.

Evaluation of Competencies, Part II

This section will help you prepare the competency evaluation tasks for submission in TaskStream. This is an opportunity for you to really think through and present what you see as your competence in relation to potential careers. This analysis will solidify the review and evaluation you have been doing these past two weeks.

Understanding your competencies will help you prepare for the next steps in your career as you complete your MBA program. This section will develop your understanding of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the competencies required for your chosen career path.

Competency Evaluation Paper

When you have completed this section, you will have completed and submitted your competency evaluation paper and the partially-completed career competencies worksheet with attention to the following details:

- Your paper is 10-15 pages.
- Your work contains generally effective sentence structure, solid vocabulary, and accurate word choice.
- Your work contains no minor or major errors (run a spelling and grammar check).
- Your work is extremely clear and easy to follow.

Now is your opportunity to demonstrate the competence you have developed as you write a competency evaluation paper identifying your personal and professional strengths for your chosen career. Job candidates who have the ability to assert their personal strengths in relation to their chosen career increase their potential for future employment.

Your study in preparation to write a competency evaluation essay has included resources from your textbook, SkillSoft, and the Graduate Business Capstone Message Board. Be sure to utilize each of these resources, as they provide a broad range of viewpoints on the topics you will need in order to write the competency evaluation paper.

Write and Review Paper for TaskStream Submission

URL: http://www.taskstream.com
Complete the competency evaluation paper task per the instructions in TaskStream.

When you have completed your competency evaluation paper, self-score your tasks and review your work on each task using the scoring rubrics in TaskStream, which are the same rubrics that the grader uses to score your task. Make sure that your work meets the minimum requirements set out by the scoring rubrics.

Submit Competency Evaluation Paper

URL: http://www.taskstream.com

Submit your competency evaluation paper and partially-developed career competencies table in TaskStream to be graded.

After a few days, check on the status of your task. If the grader did not give you a passing grade for your task you can review, revise, and resubmit with corrections. If there are any areas where you do not understand a concept, please check with the course instructor for assistance. If you do not pass the assessment within two tries, you will need to have the course instructor’s approval to try again.

Competency Development Plan

This section will help you prepare the competency development plan, career competencies worksheet, and future learning plan worksheet for submission in TaskStream. This is an opportunity for you to develop the competencies essential to the industries or businesses of interest to you. It will also be a chance to identify the future learning you want to engage in as part of your ongoing professional development. This will prepare you not only for career opportunities today but also for those that may become available in the future.

Understanding your competencies will help you prepare for the next steps in your career as you complete your MBA program. This section will help you develop a competency development plan to assist you in achieving your goals for your chosen career path.

Competency Development Plan

When you have completed this section, you will have completed and submitted your competency development plan and completed the career competencies and future learning plan worksheets with attention to the following details:

- completed gap analysis
- completed career competencies worksheet
- identified areas where additional competency development is required to reach career goals
- set a timeline for achieving competency development to meet career goals
- completed future learning plan worksheet

Make sure that

- your paper is three to five pages;
In the United States' current economic situation, many careers have changed dramatically in the requirements to be successful and the competencies or skills necessary. Therefore, it is vital for current job seekers to continue their development and education to place them in a solid position for their chosen career now and in the future. Current job seekers should ensure that they are pursuing realistic career goals. This relevant exercise will help prepare you for the real-world application you will encounter as you apply for potential positions.

**GAP Analysis**

**URL:** [http://www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)

Complete the GAP analysis per the instructions in TaskStream.

Review the results of your strengths analysis in the development of your GAP analysis as you complete the final column of your career competencies worksheet. Identify the gap between what skills, knowledge, and experiences are required for your chosen career path and the skills, knowledge, and experience you possess today.

**Complete Future Learning Plan (Competency Development Plan)**

After reviewing your GAP analysis, develop a plan for the ongoing development of your competencies.

Use the following SkillSoft resources to help you develop your competency development plan (future learning plan worksheet):

- **Module:** CONS0115: Evaluation and Review
- **Module:** PD0181: Finding Your Life Balance
- **Module:** KNOW0113: The Potential of Self-Directed Learning
- **Module:** PROJ0041: Ethics and Professional Knowledge

Complete the future learning plan worksheet.

**Write and Review Paper for TaskStream Submission**

**URL:** [http://www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)

Complete the competency development plan paper task per the instructions in TaskStream.

When you have completed your competency development plan paper, self-score your tasks and review your work on each task using the scoring rubrics in TaskStream, which are the same rubrics that the grader uses to score your task. Make sure that your work meets the minimum requirements set out by the scoring rubrics.

**Submit Competency Development Paper**
Submit your competency development paper, completed career competencies worksheet, and future learning plan worksheet in TaskStream to be evaluated.

After a few days, check on the status of your task. If the grader did not give you a passing grade for your task you can review, revise, and resubmit with corrections. If there are any areas where you do not understand a concept, please check with the course instructor for assistance. If you do not pass the assessment within two tries, you will need to have the course instructor’s approval to try again.

**Professional Networking**

This section will help you prepare the professional networking task in TaskStream. In today's business world of instant information, networking is a vital tool for a career seeker to develop and utilize. Developing an effective professional network allows you to make contacts that otherwise may pass you by and to go to those "in the know." Such a professional network will be of value to you not only in your current career or career search, but by maintaining your network, you will see benefits with future career changes as well.

Understanding how to develop and maintain a professional network will help you prepare for the next steps in your career as you complete your MBA program. This section will develop your understanding of professional networks.

**Professional Network Paper and LinkedIn Profile**

When you have completed this section, you will have completed and submitted your professional networking paper. You should have:

- addressed the purpose of a professional network,
- addressed professional networking in relationship to your chosen career path,
- identified four networking activities, and
- created a profile on LinkedIn.

Make sure that:

- your paper is three to five pages;
- your work contains generally effective sentence structure, solid vocabulary, and accurate word choice;
- your work contains no minor or major errors (run a spelling and grammar check); and
- your work is extremely clear and easy to follow.

Considering the current job market and overall economic situation, the job or career hunt has become much more competitive, and a job seeker needs to use all the available tools and avenues for contacts that are available. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate the competency you have developed in analyzing professional networking and in establishing your own LinkedIn profile as part of your network development.

**Professional Networking Review**
Review materials on professional networking, seeking a full understanding of the purpose of a professional network and how to create a professional network.

Read the following book found on Books24x7 through SkillSoft:


Review the following SkillSoft modules:

- **Module: ID: mgmt_10_a05_bs_enus: Achieving Success: The Help of a Mentor**
- **Module: ID: LEAD0132: Building Your Support System** (also check out the Job Aids and SkillBriefs identified in this module)

**Write and Review Paper for TaskStream Submission**

**URL:** [http://www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)

Complete the professional networking paper task per the instructions in TaskStream.

When you have completed your research paper, self-score your task and review your work using the scoring rubric in TaskStream, which is the same rubric that the evaluators use to score your task. Make sure that your work meets the minimum requirements set out by the scoring rubrics.

**Submit Professional Networking Paper**

**URL:** [http://www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)

Submit your professional networking paper and LinkedIn profile link in TaskStream to be graded.

After a few days, check on the status of your task. If the grader did not give you a passing grade for your task you can review, revise, and resubmit with corrections. If there are any areas where you do not understand a concept, please check with the course instructor for assistance. If you do not pass the assessment within two tries, you will need to have the course instructor’s approval to try again.

**Conclusion**

Congratulations! You have now successfully completed the Business Graduate Capstone course of study. You have selected a career path, identified your personal strengths and weaknesses relative to your chosen career, and developed a plan for ongoing professional development. You have also started to develop your professional network and are on your way to your selected career in the business world today.

**Transfer and Application**

You are now in a position to utilize the skills and competencies developed in this course of study. The uncertainty of the current job market and national economic situation makes it
imperative that you have a clear idea and plan for your career development or for maintaining your current career path, and these tasks have developed that clarity for you. You are now prepared to move forward into new job opportunities or career paths as you find them exciting or as the necessity of workplace changes require. You have the skills and competencies to continue this process of self-evaluation and career analysis as a long-term benefit to you in your continuing working experiences.

Your Next Step
You have now completed the business graduate capstone; you are ready to complete the presentation portion of the capstone, the final step to completing your MBA degree. Contact your mentor to begin working on the Capstone Presentation course of study and assessment.

Feedback
WGU values your input! If you have comments, concerns, or suggestions for improvement of this course, please submit your feedback using the following form:

- Course Feedback

ADA Policy
Western Governors University recognizes and fulfills its obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and similar state laws. Western Governors University is committed to provide reasonable accommodation(s) to qualified disabled learners in University programs and activities as is required by applicable law(s). ADA Support Services serves as the principal point of contact for students seeking accommodations and can be contacted at ADASupport@wgu.edu. Further information on WGU?s ADA policy and process can be viewed in the student handbook at the following link:

- Policies and Procedures for Students with Disabilities