



**Universiteit
Leiden**

University College The Hague

LUC CAPSTONE PROGRAMME

CAPSTONE OVERVIEW

I. OVERVIEW

The goal of the LUC Capstone is for students to complete an independent research project within the students major. The Capstone draws from each student's unique curriculum and range of scholarly experiences encountered while at LUC. The Capstone (bachelor thesis) is a product of specialized research that serves to prepare LUC students for competitive graduate programs or employment in government or industry. A supervisor oversees the research and writing. A reader is appointed for each student by the Capstone coordinator in the last stages of the Capstone process. Students may develop an individual thesis topic or work on a larger project in small groups coordinated by their supervisor. If the latter approach is adopted each student is required to develop and produce a distinct thesis. The thesis is completed during a required Capstone course (10 ECT) that all students enroll in during their final semester of residence at LUC. Bachelor theses at LUC are theoretically or conceptually motivated and exhibit high levels of creativity, rigorous enquiry, and professional production.

II. CAPSTONE COMPONENTS

The final Capstone comprises two components:

1. **Research Proposal:**

The research proposal demonstrates that students have made sufficient progress identifying their Capstone topic, show familiarity with the most up-to-date research for their selected topic, and suggest preliminary methodological approach to their topic. As with larger research projects, the final thesis is likely to deviate from the proposal to various degrees. Thus the proposal is assessed as work in progress. The proposal is graded pass/fail.

2. **Final Thesis:** The final grade is solely determined by the final thesis. The content-specific, stylistic and formatting requirements for the final thesis are explained in detail in Guidelines for Capstone. The supervisor and the assigned reader determine the grade by consensus.

III. CAPSTONE ENROLLMENT

In order to receive a grade for their Capstone students are automatically enrolled in the Capstone course in their fifth semester. All students **must have 120ECs** at the beginning of the fifth semester to be automatically enrolled.

Exceptions may be granted in the following scenarios:

1. ***Students have less than 120ECs at the beginning of their fifth semester.*** In order to be enrolled in the Capstone course the student must obtain an official approval from the Study Advisor who informs the Capstone coordinator.
2. ***Students have 120ECs or more but want to graduate later.*** In order to be dis-enrolled from the Capstone course, the student must have an approved Extended Study Plan by the Study Advisor who informs the Capstone coordinator

IV. SUPERVISOR FORM

All students must submit a supervisor form signed by their supervisor. The students who fail to submit their supervisor forms cannot receive any grades and feedback on their proposal or final Capstone thesis.

V. WITHDRAWAL FROM CAPSTONE

A student who wishes to withdraw after automatic enrollment from the Capstone course must do so officially by writing a letter to the Board of Examiners (BoE) citing well-documented extenuating circumstances. If the BoE approves extenuating circumstances, the student must submit an official withdrawal form that is signed and approved by the supervisor and the chair of the BoE to the Registrar's office.

VI. DEADLINE EXTENSIONS

In the process of writing the proposal or the final thesis, a student may apply for extensions due to the extenuating circumstances by writing an email with supporting documentation to the supervisor. After, the supervisor, in consultation with the Capstone coordinator, decides on the student's appeal. It is crucial for students to make the appeal **before** the deadline if they wish to ask for an extension. Any appeals after the deadline will not be accepted.

VII. EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Extenuating circumstances are defined as:

- i) a documented health problem,
- ii) a severe family crisis,
- iii) or a unique or extreme academic issue.

The normal workload associated with a student's course of study (scheduled exams, essays, assignments, etc...) or typical research delays are not considered grounds for an extension.

For withdrawal from Capstone course due to extenuating circumstances see [section V](#).

VIII. GRADING

The Capstone should represent an original and coherent treatment of the topic being investigated.

1. **Research proposal.** The proposal is graded pass/fail. The Capstone supervisor determines the grade. Students **must** have a passing grade on the proposal to proceed with writing the final Capstone thesis. **If a student submits her proposal more than 7 days after the deadline, the proposal automatically receives a failing grade.**

2. **Final thesis.** The supervisor and reader jointly determine the final thesis grade by consensus. If the supervisor and reader do not agree on the final thesis grade, the Capstone Coordinator will consult and mediate the dispute to help achieve consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the Board of Examiners will appoint a second reader. The final grade will then be an arithmetic average of all three grades. **Late submission of the final thesis is penalized by a letter grade deduction per day after the deadline.**

3. Grading Criteria: The Capstone grading criteria are based on the student's capacity for independent scholarly research, intellectual initiative, critical analysis, and academic writing. The proposal will provide qualitative feedback, followed by pass/fail grade. The final thesis will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- a. Justification of research topic: The subject matter is identified; there is a clearly formulated research question; the research topic falls within the subject domain of the student's Major; the connection of the research topic to existing debates is demonstrated; the wider societal importance and/or relevance is made clear.
- b. Research Design/Methodology: The research method is clearly justified, described, and replicable; the research structure is suitable to the topic/thesis; relevant qualitative and/or quantitative research methods are employed; translation of theoretical insights into own research/theoretical model.
- c. Evidence/Data/Literature: The evidence/data/literature collected are abundant, relevant, and adequately and correctly presented; appropriate scope and choice of literature studied; good understanding of source materials; evidence of critical engagement with key conceptual, theoretical, and/or empirical issues.
- d. Argument/Analysis: The analysis and interpretation of the evidence/data/literature are accurate, reliable, comprehensive, and verifiable; the analysis and interpretation of the evidence/data/literature are of sufficient profundity; the argument is developed logically, critical, coherent, and based on the presented evidence/data/literature; appropriate consideration of alternative views or counterarguments; conclusions are drawn based on the evidence/processed data in the context of the relevant theory, practice, and/or methodology; venues for further research are indicated.
- e. Structure/Style/Formatting: The text has a logical and relevant structure, which supports the content; introduction, body, and conclusion are well-developed, style adheres to the conventions of academic prose; language used is correct (grammar, spelling) and clear (punctuation); use of typographic elements (bold, italic, spacing, etc.) is appropriate and consistent; no excessive reliance on quotation and/or

paraphrasing, referencing complies with the applicable academic standards and formatting complies with the provided guidelines in Capstone Handbook.

IX. REWRITING A PROPOSAL

Students are eligible to re-write the proposal if they receive a failing grade on their first proposal. The proposal rewrite must be submitted **no later than 30 days** after submitting the first proposal. If such a proposal is still deemed insufficient, the student cannot proceed with the Capstone process and must re-enroll in the next semester. The student receives a failing grade for the Capstone.

X. REWRITING A CAPSTONE

If student does not finish or submits inadequate thesis his grade will be registered as **F** for that semester. Students who fail their Capstone can submit a rewrite **no later than August 1st**. If the rewrite is deemed sufficient the student receives a second grade for the Capstone in addition to a failing grade.

The supervisor is not required to oversee the rewrite. It is the responsibility of the student to find a supervisor who is willing to guide the student through the rewrite process. The supervisor and the student must also agree on the deadline when rewrite is due. This can be any time *before* August 1st.

Students, who fail their Capstone and/or submit insufficient rewrite by August 1st, will be formally enrolled in the **next available** Capstone course. The BoE approves any exceptions to this rule. The student must find a new supervisor if his previous supervisor cannot accept the student as her supervisee and submit a new supervisor form.

XI. CAPSTONE DEADLINES

The timeline differs for Winter and Summer graduates. Please, note carefully the individual deadlines based on when you plan to graduate. The deadlines for this academic year are available [here](#).

XII. CAPSTONE SUPERVISOR

- 1. *The Selection of a Supervisor.*** The Capstone supervisor may be a university academic staff member from within LUC. Students may also request external supervisor from Leiden University, other Dutch universities, or institutions, which employ academic (research oriented) staff. However, such a request must be formally submitted to and approved by the Capstone coordinator (see external supervisor form in Guidelines for Capstone).

Students should begin identifying possible supervisors early in the Capstone process. Students are encouraged to work with potential supervisors listed in the database available on the general Capstone Blackboard site. Students must submit their signed supervisor form online.

2. ***The Role of a Supervisor.*** The role of the Capstone supervisor is to guide the student through the entire thesis experience; from the inception of the research question to providing comments on the thesis.

Supervisors and students meet a minimum of four times. Although the nature of thesis topics will vary, the schedule of meetings should occur such that the following categories provide the general purpose of the meeting.

- pre-proposal and research design (mid to late autumn),
- post-proposal and research activities and thesis writing (early February),
- update on the thesis, such as review of the thesis outline and literature review (March),
- feedback and critique of the first draft of thesis (mid to late April),

Supervisor responsibilities also include:

- Providing direction for the identification and definition of a suitable thesis topic,
- Providing written guidance, suggestions and critique of the research proposal,
- Providing guidance and suggestions in carrying out the research activities and analyses, whether qualitative or quantitative, such that the student is prepared to conduct the study,
- Providing qualitative feedback on and grading of the research proposal,
- Confirming that all thesis requirements have been met and that the originality of the thesis has been validated through the Turnitin software (plagiarism check on Blackboard),
- Conferring with the reader in regards to the final thesis grade,
- Submitting an assessment of the final thesis to the Capstone Coordinator by June 1st.

XIII. CAPSTONE READER

1. ***The Selection of a Reader.*** The Capstone coordinator independently appoints a reader no later than the deadline of final thesis submission. The reader must be a university academic staff member from within LUC. If students or supervisors wish to request an external reader from Leiden University, other Dutch universities, or possibly external institutions, which employ academic (research oriented) staff, they must do so on an individual basis by sending a request by email to the Capstone coordinator. The Capstone coordinator must approve such a request.
2. ***The Role of a Reader.*** The role of the reader is to provide an assessment of the final thesis to the student's thesis supervisor, and to deliberate on the final thesis grade. The reader should do so independently without the input of the supervisor first and confer with the supervisor to determine the grade later. The reader is anonymous during the grading period.

The name of the reader will be released on the grade form the student receives. The reader should also refrain from having any contact with the student regarding the thesis before conferring with the supervisor about the final grade.

Understanding that the reader need not be a specialist within the thesis topic or may come from a different field, the reader's assessment should be sensitive to the discipline specific standards and norms in a professional manner in line with the interdisciplinary nature of LUC.

The reader's primary responsibility is:

- to check whether the thesis fulfills the official structural and stylistic requirements of the Capstone thesis as listed in the Guidelines for Capstones;
- to assess the degree each category of assessment fulfills the quality standards of a bachelor thesis at LUC;
- confer with the supervisor about the final thesis grade;
- submit a written qualitative feedback along with supervisor's comments.

XIV. AWARDS

1. Thesis of Merit

All theses that receive A or A+ will be automatically nominated for a *Thesis of Merit*. The number of awards per year is limited to 12. A faculty committee composed of judges representing each major assesses the quality of the scholarship of the nominated theses. The Awards Committee will assess theses based on specific criteria.

Criteria for Thesis of Merit

Theses will be evaluated based on the degree to which high standards were met in all grading criteria judged by the Supervisor *and* according to *all or some* of the following six categories as judged by the awards committee.

- *Intellectual Contribution*: Does the thesis significantly contribute to the body of knowledge in his/her field?
- *Interdisciplinary Contribution*: how are the findings and implications relevant to other fields of knowledge? Is the linkage with other fields of knowledge explicit or implied?
- *Research Effort*: What is the level of depth and sophistication of the research effort? Was the depth of analysis appropriate for the student's training and the research question? What was involved in obtaining the research materials (primary, secondary, archival, etc...)?
- *Broader Impact*: What is the societal relevance of the research? Did the student make explicit or implicit connections between his/her research findings and society?
- *Writing*: Is the thesis well written? Was the use of academic English at an advanced level? Are there consistent and/or problematic errors of grammar or structure? Does the writing demonstrate coherence?
- *Presentation*: Are figures, tables, graphics, and other illustrations clear? Were the thesis

guidelines and formatting instructions closely followed?

2. Brill Prize

The Brill Prize is coordinated by the Brill-Nijhoff Writing Institute at LUC, and is awarded to a thesis that excels through its originality of approach and manner of presentation.

CAPSTONE GUIDELINES AND FORMS

I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. All LUC theses must comply with standard general guidelines for the following: title page and prepages; font size and type; pagination of prepages, text, and appendices; numbering of sections, subsections, figures, and tables (see Section II);
2. The proposal and thesis must be uploaded to Blackboard to be checked for plagiarism. Failure to do so by a student represents insufficient proposal and thesis and receives a failing grade;
3. A bachelor thesis must be written in the student's major and degree (BSc or BA);

II. CAPSTONE SUBMISSION

The final Capstone thesis must be submitted in 3 copies:

1. A bound hard copy of the thesis is required to be submitted to LUC's Capstone administrator,
2. A bound hard copy of the thesis is required to be submitted to the Capstone supervisor;
3. An electronic version (pdf) of the Final Thesis must be uploaded in Turnitin on Blackboard. The supervisor and the reader grade the electronic version of the final Capstone thesis.

Any discrepancies between the bound hard copy and the digital version of the Capstone will result in the referral to the Board of Examiners for violating the Code of Conduct and are likely to result in a failing grade for the final Capstone thesis.

III. USE OF PRIOR MATERIALS AND EFFORTS

It is permissible to utilize materials from prior courses or academically enriching experiences, such as an internship. Such efforts, however, are expected to represent the initial or supporting ideas of the Capstone rather than a finished section of the Capstone. Students who wish to utilize written work from prior courses or experiences must receive permission from their Capstone supervisor.

IV. PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a direct violation of the LUC Honour Code and is therefore not acceptable. Materials from prior courses or efforts are allowed to be integrated into the Capstone, but students should be careful to avoid self-plagiarism. It is **not acceptable** to directly copy text from a prior paper. The proposal, first draft, and final thesis must be uploaded to Blackboard to be checked with plagiarism software.

V. GUIDELINES FOR CAPSTONE PROPOSAL

Completion of the Capstone Proposal is an essential step in the Capstone process. Importantly, a good proposal prepares the researcher for the forthcoming activities and outlines the task ahead. The process of proposal writing helps to assure that the researcher has a clear understanding of the relation between the research topic (problem, objectives, hypotheses) and the research activities (methods and analysis). Finally, the proposal serves as an assurance that the supervisor and student share the same expectations from the standpoint of the research goals, activities, and work load. The proposal, however, is a work in progress and deviations from the proposal in the final thesis are expected.

The supervisor determines the exact word count based on the disciplinary conventions.

Format of the Proposal:

1. *Title Page*

A good title is important because it creates the first impression to the audience. The title should be a brief, clear statement of the subject of the research. Highly technical words should be avoided where possible.

The title page should include:

- Title
- Submitted by: (with affiliation)
- Submitted to: (with affiliation)
- Date of submission

2. *Project Summary*

The summary should be a self-contained description of the activity to be undertaken and should include: (a) overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives; (b) general plans (activities) to accomplish project goal(s); and (c) larger significance of the study. The summary should be limited to 500 words.

3. *Introduction*

This section defines the problem and establishes the project significance. In many ways this is the most important part of the proposal. If you fail to convince the audience of the importance of your research at the very beginning of the proposal it is unlikely that you will receive permission to proceed. The following questions may help organize your thoughts:

- What is the research problem?
- What is the purpose of research?
- What is the rationale for research?
- What are the research objectives?
- What has been done in the past to deal with the problem?
- What needs to be done, given the current knowledge base?
- How will the research be completed (overview of methods)?

These questions should be briefly addressed at a *general* level. The Introduction should lay a comprehensive foundation for what you plan to do, why it needs to be done, and how you

plan to do it. Subsequent sections are more specific and should relate back (support) to the (general) Introduction.

4. Literature review

Here you must clearly articulate your knowledge of the field by developing a case for your study supported with the pertinent literature. More importantly, you are building on the rationale for your project, supported by the current state of knowledge on the topic (i.e., literature). The literature review should expand upon the problem in greater depth with a thorough and concise review of related research. It should compactly synthesize previous work (perhaps even a table or figure). A synthesis of the literature is not a blow-by-blow account of what each previous research accomplished. Rather, it combines results of different studies into a single idea. This can be articulated by making (bold) statements about the status of knowledge, which is subsequently supported by statements that cite the key references. A good literature review addresses debates relative to the research problem. Here it can be helpful to justify why you affiliate with one side of the debate. A good literature review should include “key” classic (benchmark) references and also the current citations.

5. Project Description

The text of the project description should range from 1500 to 2000 words. Within this range the supervisor determines the appropriate proposal length (word count). All proposals should be submitted on standard paper size with margins of 2.5 cm along all four sides. Although the contents and subsection titles may vary according to the research topic, the project description should contain some combination of the following components:

6. Setting (optional... if location dependent)

Should identify the location of field research and characterize the physical and/or human setting (demographics, geology, climate, flora, culture region, etc...). It is important to keep in mind that everything reviewed here relates back to your research problem. In other words, what is so special about working in The Hague, Timbuktu... or wherever?

7. Methodological Approach and Timetable

The methodology should explicitly relate to the hypotheses or research questions being asked. This section might include:

- A description of the investigations and/or experiments proposed in the sequence to be performed.
- Techniques to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the techniques.
- Means by which data/information will be analyzed or interpreted.
- Assumptions and inherent limitations to proposed procedures (possible pitfalls)
- A tentative schedule for conducting major steps involved in these investigations and/or experiments. Be sure to mention in your time-table when you will be involved in each of the major steps (training, field activities, lab work, analysis, etc...) and the writing update deadline.

While depth of knowledge of the subject matter is illustrated by the literature review, the “methods” section provides an opportunity to demonstrate competence in actually doing the research. Appropriate references should be cited for specific research activities. It helps to be somewhat detailed and descriptive in this section so that the reader has a clear understanding of how the research is intended to unfold.

8. Budget

Include itemized amount and brief justification for specific expenses. Specific items might include equipment, supplies (field, university), travel (train travel to an archive or research center, food, lodging, etc...), and laboratory expenses (including contract work)

9. References

All references cited should be complete, and the referencing style should conform to one of the premier journals in the field of specialty. Students should consult with their supervisor for advice.

VI. GUIDELINES FOR FINAL THESIS

Each LUC thesis must abide by the following structure.

1. Prepages
 - Title Page (see example below)
 - Abstract (limited to 350 words)
 - Table of Contents
 - List of Tables
 - List of Figures
 - List of Appendices
 - Acknowledgements
 - Main Text
2. Dedication
3. References (and Endnotes)
4. Appendices

The supervisor determines the exact word count based on the disciplinary conventions.

Thesis Structure: Suggested Order and Brief Contents of Thesis Chapters*

The length of individual chapters will vary based on the major, field of specialization, and whether the study involves original (primary) research or whether it is an analysis of published materials. Although convention within specific fields of specializations may dictate that *the titles and contents of thesis chapters may vary*, each thesis, whether inherently qualitative or quantitative, must include the following essential chapters / sections:

** The thesis structure can be modified to accommodate disciplinary conventions, and students should consult with their supervisor for an appropriate structure.*

1. **Abstract (Project Summary):**
 - A succinct (350 word max) narrative of the overall research project, including rationale, methodological approaches, conclusions, and implications
2. **Introduction (Scope of Study):**
 - The scope of the research topic is defined, and a case for the research is presented (rationale). The research purpose and objectives are clearly defined in a format that is readable to a non-specialist.
3. **Literature Review (Previous Research):**
 - The problem statement is elucidated from a synthesis and critique of the pertinent literature within the field of specialty, which supports the more general topic and rationale defined in the Introduction. Specific hypotheses or research questions are related to the problem statement.
4. **Study Setting (optional):**
 - What are the characteristics of the study area? Why is the location (e.g., city, culture region, physical region, climate, nation, mountain, river, etc...) important to the research problem? Describe the phenomenon using data from secondary sources (agencies, published accounts)
5. **Methodological approach**
 - What data sets/information must be collected to examine your hypotheses? How was the data/information collected?

- What techniques and methods were utilized to characterize and analyze the data?
 - In the case of qualitative research, how was the argument formulated?
6. **Results (Findings):**
 - A succinct characterization of the findings, presented in tables, charts, etc... The writing should be centered around the presentation of the data (qualitative or quantitative).
 7. **Discussion (Analysis):**
 - The results are related back to the literature in the specialty, particularly to theoretical debates. How did the findings support or conflict with previously held tenets? The chapter may conclude by considering the broader relevance of the research findings (beyond their specialty), such as societal, environmental, management, or other interdisciplinary implications. What are the possible limitations to the study, approach, and results?
 8. **Conclusions and Future Research:**
 - A succinct overview of the important findings as supported by the data and analysis. The study should conclude by noting future research directions or questions that were elucidated through the research efforts.

Final Thesis Formatting Requirements:

1. Use a good bond paper, A4 size, with margins of 2.5 cm along all four sides
2. Font and type: 12 point font size and a consistent font type throughout the thesis,
3. Spacing: Double-space throughout thesis, except for longer quotations, formulae, tables, or footnotes,
4. Citation and reference style: consistently follow a premier scholarly journal in the field of specialty,
5. Pagination and numbering: use small Roman numerals (ii, iii, etc.) for all prepages after the Title Page (which is not numbered). Use either Roman or Arabic numerals for the Main Text, Dedication, and References. Appendices are numbered according to A, B, C, ... (ex: A1, A2, A3; B1, B2; C...). Within the Main Text, chapters should be consecutively numbered (Arabic or Roman). Sections, subsections, figures, and tables should be consecutively numbered,

(sample thesis title page)

SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO FLOOD MANAGEMENT ALONG COASTAL
PLAIN RIVERS IN AN ERA OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

BY

Leopold A. Wolman

CAPSTONE THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR A MAJOR AND DEGREE IN

SUSTAINABILITY
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE THE HAGUE

UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN

2014