



**Universiteit
Leiden**

University College The Hague

LUC CAPSTONE PROGRAMME

Class of 2015

SECTION I: CAPSTONE DEFINITION AND OVERVIEW

SECTION I: CAPSTONE DEFINITION AND OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview and definition of the LUC Capstone (bachelor thesis), including requirements, grading, committee, awards, and time-line. Please note that **SECTION II: CAPSTONE GUIDELINES AND FORMS** is to be found on the LUC Capstone Blackboard site, and includes specific description of requirements, structure and format guidelines, as well as forms for the Capstone committee and grading.

1. 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 students 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. The research and writing is overseen by a supervisor and a reader, one of which must be based at LUC. 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 adapted 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.

2. CAPSTONE COMPONENTS

The final Capstone grade is based on the two components:

1. Research Proposal @ 20%,
2. Final Thesis @ 80%.

3. GRADING

The final Capstone grade is calculated by applying the specific criteria (below) to the two components of the Capstone grade: Proposal and Final Thesis. The Capstone should represent an original and coherent treatment of the topic being investigated. The proposal is graded by the supervisor, whereas the final thesis grade is jointly determined by the supervisor and reader. If the supervisor and reader do not agree on the final thesis grade the grade for the final thesis will be determined by a third reader appointed by the Board of Examiners, taking into account the assessment of both the supervisor and reader. The grading of the proposal and final thesis are based upon the standard LUC grading scale and grading rubric (available on LUC's e-prospectus).

Late assignments (without extenuating circumstances) are subject to a 2% grade deduction per day.

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 and final thesis will be assessed according to the following criteria, *with the weight of individual criteria subject to the committee's discretion*.

	4	3	2	1	0	
Content. Outstanding understanding of material. All material is relevant with acute emphasis on key issues.						No understanding of material. Irrelevant material. Key issues not perceived.
Justification. Compelling case for the importance and/or relevance of the essay topic.						No explanation as to why the essay topic is important and/or relevant.
Argument. Puts forward a clear and original position or argument. Appropriate consideration of alternative views or counterarguments.						No articulation of position or argument.
Evidence. Presents abundant, relevant, and accurate evidence that supports the argument. Essay relies on a wide range of appropriate literature and/or source material.						No evidence is provided or evidence is inappropriate, mistaken, and/or oversimplified.
Research effort. The research included appropriate methods and a rigorous level of analysis suited for the research topic, whether qualitative or quantitative.						Methods are unsupported, inappropriate, or absent. Analysis is flawed or absent.
Structure. Essay is impeccably organized. Clear statement of problem, question or thesis. Logical and rigorous development of discussion. Introduction, body, and conclusion are well developed. Signposting throughout the paper is efficient.						No identifiable structure.
Style. Exceptionally clear expression, academic prose, correct grammar and spelling. Technical terms or unusual words are defined or clarified.						Unclear, muddled, presentation. Grammatical and spelling errors.
Referencing. Accurate, consistent, citations, references, and bibliography.						No citation, or significant errors and/or omissions.

4. CAPSTONE PROGRAMME TIME-LINE

Early fall	Student discusses thesis direction with tutor, consults supervisor database, meets with prospective thesis supervisor.
24 October	<u>Supervisor and Topic</u> : Deadline for student to file “Capstone Thesis Supervisor Form” to Student Affairs Office, including supervisor signature and a provisional thesis title
2 December	Brief <u>first draft of thesis proposal</u> due to supervisor. (750 word limit)
2 February (20%)	<u>Final Proposal</u> : Student submits the final proposal to thesis supervisor and uploads to Blackboard. See proposal guidelines. Supervisor should complete the grade form and communicate the grade to the Capstone Coordinator. (see guidelines)
2 March	<u>Reader</u> : Provide the signed reader form to the Capstone Coordinator
2 March	<u>Writing update and Thesis Outline (recommended)</u> : Include a detailed thesis outline and a significant writing sample, such as the first chapter or methods section, as determined by the thesis supervisor.
15 April	<u>First Draft</u> : Complete formatted thesis submitted to supervisor (uploaded to Blackboard)
11 May (80%)	<u>Final Thesis</u> : Deadline for final thesis to be submitted to Supervisor and Reader for grading, and also to be uploaded to Blackboard.
1 June	Nominations for Capstone <i>Thesis of Merit</i> awards due to the Capstone Coordinator.
1 June	Supervisor submits final thesis grade and Capstone grades to the Capstone Coordinator.
Mid June (tbd)	Capstone Awards announced
Mid June (tbd)	Capstone Research Symposium

The above timeline is for students undertaking the majority of their thesis research in the final semester, appropriate for analysis of secondary sources and literature. Students completing theses requiring original empirical research are forewarned to begin the data collection phase of their research in the summer or autumn preceding their Capstone semester. Such activities may include laboratory, archival, or field oriented research involving foreign travel. Undertaking such activities requires that the student has obtained a thesis supervisor in advance of the 24 October deadline.

5. CAPSTONE COMMITTEE

The student's Capstone is overseen by a supervisor and a reader, which comprises the Capstone committee. One member of the committee must be based at LUC. The committee is charged with assessing the overall quality of the Capstone, from inception of research question to providing a formal assessment of the Final Thesis to the Capstone Coordinator. The supervisor and reader forms are located in Section II on the LUC Capstone Blackboard site.

Supervisor

The Capstone supervisor must be university academic staff from within LUC or Leiden University, other Dutch universities, or institutions which employ academic (research oriented) staff. Students should begin identifying possible supervisors early in the Capstone process and prior to having identified a specific topic. Students are encouraged to work with potential supervisors listed on the database available on the LUC Capstone Blackboard site.

The role of the Capstone supervisor is to guide the student through the entire spectrum of the thesis experience; from inception of research question to providing comments and edits on the thesis. The thesis supervisor has an important role in the student's curriculum, and represents an essential academic mentor as the student transitions from undergraduate study to graduate research or employment.

Supervisor responsibilities include:

1. Providing direction for the identification and definition of a suitable thesis topic,
2. Providing written guidance, suggestions and critique of the research proposal,
3. 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,
4. Grading the research proposal,
5. Providing written guidance, suggestions, critique, and feedback of the thesis writing, structure, and format,
6. A minimum of four meetings with the student, occurring over the autumn and spring semesters. 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.
 - i. pre-proposal and research design (mid to late autumn),
 - ii. post-proposal and research activities and thesis writing (early February),
 - iii. update on thesis, such as review of thesis outline and literature review (March),
 - iv. feedback and critique of first draft of thesis (mid to late April),
7. 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),
8. Conferring with the Reader in regards to the final thesis grade, including his/her written comments,
9. Submitting an assessment of the final thesis to the Capstone Coordinator by 1 June.

Reader

A (second) reader is required and must be approved by the Capstone Coordinator. The role of the reader is to provide an assessment of the final thesis to the student's thesis supervisor, and to deliberate on a final thesis grade. The reader need not be a specialist within the thesis topic, but care should be taken to identify a reader who is able and willing to evaluate the scholarly contents of the thesis within the time frame of the Capstone requirements. The reader should be academic staff from within LUC. Exceptions must be preapproved by the Capstone Coordinator. The reader is not responsible for providing edits and suggestions on prior drafts of the thesis.

The reader form must be submitted by 1 March to the Capstone Coordinator. It is the student's responsibility that the form is submitted by the due date.

6. REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements

1. Proposal: Every Capstone includes a formal proposal that is accepted and graded by the thesis supervisor. A first draft of the proposal is due 1 December to the thesis supervisor (limited to 750 words). The final proposal should range from 2,000 and 4,000 words, as determined by the supervisor, and meet the formal LUC proposal requirements and guidelines (see Section II on the LUC Capstone Blackboard),
2. 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 on the Capstone Blackboard),
3. The thesis must be uploaded to Blackboard to be checked for plagiarism, including the proposal, first draft, and Final Thesis,
4. A bachelor thesis must be written in the student's major and degree (BSc or BA),
5. Students are responsible for finding a thesis supervisor and research topic, and obtaining his/her consent to direct the thesis,
6. A bound (hard copy) version of the thesis is required to be submitted to LUC, and to the thesis supervisor and reader if requested,
7. An electronic version (pdf) of the Final Thesis must be submitted to the student's Capstone supervisor and the LUC Capstone coordinator,

Writing Requirements

While the organization and length of LUC theses will vary based on the field of specialization, methodological approach, and the supervisor's guidance, all LUC theses must accommodate a thorough review of the literature, research approach (methods), presentation of findings (e.g., tables, photos, graphics,

etc...), and conclusions *as appropriate to the field of study*.

All LUC theses are to include a literature review *appropriate for their specialty*. The literature review should demonstrate the student's ability to articulate a clear research problem and research questions through reviewing and synthesizing the appropriate published scholarly literature, including theoretical debates.

It is expected that the thesis should be theoretically and or conceptually informed, which is brought out in the rationale, problem statement, development of concepts, and in the way that the observations (or data) are related to the central argument. Although the supervisor will decide the arrangement and expression of the following items within the thesis, all LUC Capstone theses must include a rationale, problem statement, purpose of study, hypothesis or research question, research objectives, research approach (and/or methods and data), and findings. These specific items are further described in SECTION II, on the LUC Capstone Blackboard.

Word Count

The acceptable number of words for the "main text" (excluding footnotes or endnotes, bibliographies, glossaries, figures, prepages, appendices, etc...) of LUC theses are 7,500 – 15,000 words (~30 to 60 pages). Within this range the supervisor decides on the appropriate length (word count) of the thesis.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. AWARDS

Thesis of Merit

Theses that represent the highest scholarship shall be considered for LUC's "*Thesis of Merit*" award. The number of awards per year is not limited, and students are judged by a faculty committee. The committee may further designate up to several (~3) theses of *Highest Merit* which most strongly meet the awards criteria. Students are nominated by their supervisor, and must meet specific requirements. Theses submitted late, after the 11 May deadline, are ineligible for consideration of Merit.

Nomination Requirements

- Students may not be on academic probation,
- Capstone supervisor has submitted the grade for the final thesis,
- Letter of nomination by supervisor,
- A digital and bound version of the Final Thesis submitted to the Capstone Coordinator by the submission deadline.

Criteria for *Thesis of Merit*

Theses meeting the nomination requirements 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.

1. *Intellectual Contribution*: Does the thesis significantly contribute to the body of knowledge in his/her field?
2. *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?
3. *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...)?
4. *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?
5. *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?
6. *Presentation*: Are figures, tables, graphics, and other illustrations clear? Were the thesis guidelines and formatting instructions closely followed?

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.

10. CAPSTONE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Students are provided an opportunity to present their research at the Capstone Research Symposium, which occurs prior to LUC's graduation. The research symposium will include oral and poster presentations and is an opportunity to celebrate LUC's bachelor research.