

BA 490 Business Capstone / BA 497 Senior Project

COURSE INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

This Capstone course is the culminating course for all the other courses and content a student has undertaken to achieve a B.A. in Business Administration degree from Midway College.

While the capstone course can be challenging, it provides a truly unique learning experience. The capstone course is a self-directed, integrated, learning opportunity. This means students will work during the course dates to complete the course requirements with the course instructor as a mentor.

It is the intent of this course that the student will bring to bear all the learning and knowledge from the courses, work experiences and personal life to show competence in the selected field of business administration. From the very first day of the course you must begin work on your Independent Research Project and your Leadership Portfolio. Both of these will be due by midnight on the last Sunday of the course.

The course is divided into three major areas:

1. Independent Research Project (IRP)
2. Leadership Portfolio
3. Major Field Test

The course has specific milestones/due dates as communicated in the “Student Assignment Tracking Sheet.”

Students are encouraged to work in parallel as they progress through this course; however, work must be submitted to the course professor for review on the assigned due dates to avoid late penalties. Students must review and evaluate feedback ---- instructor feedback and concerns must be addressed.

As students develop their paper and portfolio, as feedback is provided; students will have to review all current and previous sections to ensure that new information and learning is incorporated – for consistency, content, organization and structure.

As completing an independent self-directed project may be 'charting new territory' for the student, the following guidelines are provided to assist students:

- **Effective and Frequent Communication:** Communication is critical: It will be advantageous for students to arrange to meet regularly with the instructor to review work already done and to confirm that the projects are proceeding in the right direction (by phone, Skype or face-to-face).
- **Project Planning Skills:**
 - Work to stay on track as per “Student Assignment Tracking Sheet.”
 - Have a routine when you schedule time to work on assignments – 3-4 times per week.
 - Set goals for each work session – be productive with your time.
 - Collaborate: Share work with fellow students to obtain feedback and learn from others
 - Be open: As this may be a new situation, be open to feedback and new or different ways of working and doing things.
 - Review feedback from different perspectives and with open mind.
 - **Personal Responsibility:** Take responsibility for your progress and work. Plan your time according to allow you apply work effort to meet the requirements of the course (Review the Accepting Personal Responsibility document)

Accepting personal responsibility includes:

- Acknowledging that you are solely responsible for the choices in your life. You make the decisions and prioritize.
- Accepting that you are responsible for what you choose to feel or think.
- Accepting that you cannot blame others for the choices you have made and make

PART 1: The Independent Research Project (IRP)

The purpose of the IRP is to provide an opportunity for students to integrate coursework, knowledge, skills, and experimental learning to enable students to demonstrate knowledge of their chosen topic area. The research project will focus on a key business problem/issue, to be researched and analyzed by the student with a recommended solution(s) presented.

Each student will research, evaluate, analyze, draw conclusions, and make recommendations on a specific business environment/situation.

Ideally, the IRP should identify a specific concept (for example: leadership, performance, process improvement, marketing) be based on a practical experience and something that contributed significantly to an organization that the student is currently working with or has worked with in the past.

Typically, the IRP will run between 15 and 25 pages in length (not including the title, table of contents, reference and Appendix pages).

All work must be formatted as per APA guidelines.

The IRP can be:

- A traditional research project
- A case history
- A business report
- A business plan

Let's look at all 4 template options for the IRP. One of these must be used.

A. Traditional Research Paper

The purpose of this research paper is to give you some experience into the process of learning about a business topic, formulating some questions about the topic, conducting research, and then writing intelligently and interestingly about it. No matter what line of work you eventually find yourself pursuing, you will be more effective in your chosen career if you can research and master new material quickly, synthesize sources of information and critically evaluate them, and finally communicate what you've learned to others.

A typical research paper will include a five chapter template.

B. Case Study

Case studies focus on real world settings and on an issue or set of issues impacting an individual, a group, department, organization, or business sector. A case study provides its readers with lessons that can be drawn from it, illustrating a particular theory or conceptual framework and describing what happened. This type of study can be a very powerful tool for analysis.

C. Business Report

Business reports are systematic attempts to answer questions and solve problems. Various business disciplines such as accounting, finance, management, marketing and commerce are often required to prepare them. For example:

- Accounting and finance personnel may be asked to analyze their company's financial data and to write a report detailing their findings,
- Marketing staff may be asked to research and develop a marketing campaign for a product and to write a report presenting the proposal to the company,
- Managers may be asked to report on the management structure of their company and make recommendations for its improvement

D. Business Plan

An effective business plan outlines all aspects of the economic viability of the business venture. It will define and focus its objectives using appropriate information and analysis. Also, it will sell the business idea to key personnel, suppliers, lenders, investors and banks. Most importantly the business planning process can uncover omissions and/or weaknesses in your plan in its development and prevent problems during its implementation.

The business plan must be ready to go. This means all sections and data must be at a detail level where the plan can be presented to a sponsor – a financial institute or senior management team of an organization. The business plan document must be accompanied with a 20 slide PowerPoint Presentation (with speaker notes).

PART 2: Leadership Portfolio

Why the Portfolio is Important

Portfolios are important for a number of reasons. By looking at the student's work as a whole, patterns begin to emerge. The student should begin to think not just about the work itself but of the work in the context of larger issues and ideas. The patterns seen within the larger context can help the student learn more about their intellectual strengths and guide the student in understanding and making future choices.

Another strength of the reflective portfolio is that it provides the student with the ability to demonstrate his/her intelligence in a manner that is not predominantly in written expression.

While some of the same characteristics of a formal paper are important, this evaluative process examines a wider scope of activities in which the student has been engaged.

A leadership portfolio:

- Reflects the student as a professional person
- Is a record of the student's professional development
- Demonstrates how the student performs/excels on the job or in the classroom
- Demonstrates what the student has accomplished. (i.e., tangible artifacts/evidence)
- Is a document of the student's efforts at developing new skills

The portfolio the student assembles will highlight the aspects of his/her intellect and performance that has changed since the student joined their program at Midway College.

The leadership portfolio is submitted as one single word document.

Leadership Portfolio Components:

- Title page
- Table of Contents
- Acknowledgements
- Introduction
- Personal Mission Statement and Goals & Objectives
- Professional/Career Mission Statement and Goals & Objectives
- Skills Acquired & Learning During Degree Program at Midway College
- Examples of skills and Learning
- Resume
- Lifelong Learning Plan (using SMART goals approach)
- Personal
- Professional
- Academic
- Student Coursework Portfolio: 4-5 pieces of work
- Key assignments, papers, or projects from the degree program.
- Optional: The student can include material from their experiences in the last two years that demonstrates their learning and progress outside the program. For instance, the student might include something from a project at work. evaluate curricula and to measure the student progress.

PART 3: Major Field Test – Business

There is no preparation, study guides or homework students are required or can use for this test. Students should just arrive at the test location at the designated time and bring a H2 pencil.

Colleges and Universities use the Educational Testing Services (ETS) Major Field Tests to measure student academic achievement and growth and to assess the educational outcomes of

their business programs. In addition, academic departments use the Major Field Tests to evaluate curricula and to measure the student progress.

This two-hour multiple-choice test is designed to assess the student's mastery of concepts, principles, and knowledge expected of students at the conclusion of an academic major in Business. In addition to factual knowledge, the tests evaluate the student's abilities to analyze and solve problems, understand relationships, and interpret material. While the results of the test will not influence the student's grades, it will provide them with feedback on areas they may need to further develop.

In this course you will be told how you can access and take the Major Field Test in Business. Your score on the major field test will help the college in its ongoing task of evaluating the efficacy of the Organizational Administration and Leadership program.

Your score on the Business Major Field test is not reflected on your transcript.

When you take the test at the mandated date and time you will receive 50 points towards your final grade in this class