

**University of Nevada Las Vegas
Department of Public Administration
Graduate Program**

**Executive Master of Science in Crisis and
Emergency Management**

**ECEM 734
Capstone Handbook
*DRAFT July 5, 2007***

ECEM 734 Capstone Guidelines and Requirements

Step 1: Contact your Faculty Advisor

Your faculty advisor is the ECEM 734 instructor who will supervise your capstone project from start to finish. At the time of this writing, the ECEM 734 Instructor is: James P. O'Brien, Ph.D.

The Faculty Advisor is responsible for establishing schedules of meeting dates and times, approving the topic, prospectus, proposal, and final draft. Working productively with your faculty advisor is a crucial step in completing your project.

To begin the process, generate ideas for your capstone project and informally discuss them with various members of the faculty and class members.

Step 2: Project Selection

Students need to decide between an independent policy analysis or program evaluation (professional paper); or, a special project with an agency. The professional paper is a traditional analytical project involving paper development, data collection, and statistical or qualitative analyses, which might or might not involve working with an emergency management agency. The agency collaborative project requires the application of scientific knowledge to a real-world problem identified in an emergency management agency that is funded by the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG).

Professional Paper Requirements. Students are responsible for initiating the steps of a research project that represents an original idea in terms of examining an emergency management issue involving policy analysis or program evaluation. These steps include developing a thesis statement, designing a method for collecting data, and conducting statistical or quantitative analyses. Gaining access to participants or other related data are the student's responsibility.

Special Project Requirements. With the guidance of the faculty advisor, students will seek an arrangement with an emergency management agency that will allow them to work on a special project. The agency must receive funding through the Emergency Management Performance Grant. The special project may be initiated by the agency or the student, and may involve such activities as policy analysis, program development, program evaluation, instrument validation, etc. Occasionally, project requests are submitted to the Department of Public Administration from various agencies. Your faculty advisor will work with you to match your interests to those requests if appropriate.

Before selecting a project, students should meet with multiple agencies to discuss possible collaborations. However, before starting any project, the student must identify an agency representative who will agree to provide the student with access to agency resources and information, and to oversee the student's work at the agency. Complete contact information for

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the agency supervisor must be provided to the faculty advisor before initiating any work.

Students are expected to act professionally and to complete all requested work in a thorough and timely fashion. Special projects must be written up as a case study supported by academic research.

Step 3: Prospectus

You are required to provide your faculty advisor with a one-page description of the project you intend to pursue. Include information described by project type below:

Professional paper: What problem will you address? What research questions/hypotheses do you intend to test? Is the project feasible, socially important, and scientifically relevant? What relevant literature will you review? If you already have a draft proposal from a previous class, provide a copy to your faculty advisor along with this overview.

Special project: What agency and/or unit do you plan to work with? What type of project will you work on? What activities will you be responsible for as part of this collaboration? What will you focus on for your capstone paper?

Step 4: Project Approval

Upon approval of your project plan, you and your faculty advisor will complete the *Capstone Project Request Form* (to be developed). This form must be submitted by the 12th week of ECEM Module 2.

Set a date with your faculty advisor for submitting your capstone proposal. It is important that you complete your proposal by the date you have set with your advisor. Delays and difficulties conducting this portion of the project should be addressed with your advisor as early as possible. Drafts of the proposal also should be proofread for spelling and grammatical errors, and formatted according to American Psychological Association guidelines.

Step 5: Proposal

Capstone proposals consist of a well-developed literature review, a method/project plan section, and, if applicable, approval from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.

Literature review: Each student must conduct a current review of the relevant scientific literature related to the topic area. This usually includes examination of a variety of databases such as *HazLit* and others. All literature reviews must use citations and references consistent with APA format. Failure to use citations and references correctly will result in the project not moving forward.

Method/project plan: This section describes the method or approach being used. Method sections should be written in future tense since the project is a proposal that will be executed

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some time in the future. Method sections will vary depending on the type of project, but should generally follow the format outlined in the APA Publication Manual. Your faculty advisor will provide the exact requirements for your method section.

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects: It is the policy of UNLV that any research involving humans as subjects must be conducted in an ethical manner. This university follows the guidelines mandated by federal regulations by having an institutional review board (IRB) in place to review all research involving human subjects. At UNLV, the review board for ECEM is called the Social/Behavioral Sciences IRB. The IRB is here to facilitate the research process and to ensure that the rights of the human subjects are protected and all risks are minimized.

Faculty, staff, or students doing research using human participants as subjects, regardless of the location of the research, must submit a proposal to the IRB. All research, including graduate level theses and similar projects, involving humans must be reviewed and approved (or exempted) prior to any data collection. Failure to obtain approval could lead to increased legal liability to the researcher and all parties involved.

IRB proposals should be submitted at least five weeks prior to an IRB meeting. IRB meetings are held approximately once a month per calendar year. A listing of the meeting dates is available on this web site: <http://research.unlv.edu/OPRS/irb-schedule.htm>.

Investigators are strongly urged to attend the IRB meeting during which their proposals undergo review. By being present at the review, the investigator has the opportunity to answer or clarify any questions the committee may have, and receive suggestions for improving the research, thus expediting the review and approval process. IRB meetings are open and anyone in the UNLV community is welcome to attend.

IRB forms are available on the OPRS web site in downloadable form. Hard copies of the form are available from OPRS.

Once your proposal and IRB materials are submitted to your faculty advisor, he will review it and provide feedback and recommend changes. When your proposal is acceptable to your advisor and the IRB process is completed, the *Approval of Professional Paper Form* (TBD) or *Approval of Special Project Form* (TBD) is then completed by your advisor and sent to the Director of the ECEM program and Department Chairman along with a copy of your IRB approval notification, and a hard copy of the proposal.

Step 6: Planning & Execution

Meet with your faculty advisor, and agency supervisor if applicable, to identify all activities that need to be completed in accordance with your methods or project plan. Activities may include collecting agency records, recruiting participants, setting up interviews, sending out surveys, scheduling and attending meetings, etc. Develop a list of activities and the specific tasks associated with each activity, along with a timetable for completing those activities. Submit a copy of your management plan to you faculty advisor. Note. You are responsible for completing

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all activities according to this timeline. Failure to complete activities according to agreed upon dates may result in cancellation of the paper or project by your advisor.

Step 7: Draft of Completed Project

Submit the first draft of your completed paper or project to your faculty advisor. The first draft should include all sections of the project and be in APA format including title page, headings, references, etc. The faculty advisor reviews the project and provides feedback and recommends changes. This is an iterative process and may require several revisions. Students are advised to make revisions in a timely manner. Once the faculty advisor has approved of the changes, the student may proceed to Step #8.

Step 8: Oral Defense

Schedule a time during the last on-campus session for the formal oral defense in the presence of your peers. The evaluation committee for your oral defense will consist of your faculty advisor, program staff, and peers. For the oral defense, prepare a 15-20 minute overview of the goals, methods, results, and implications of your project. After your presentation, be prepared to answer questions about any aspect of your project. After the presentation and question and answer portions are completed, the evaluation committee will decide if you have successfully defended your project. It is likely that further revisions will be suggested during your defense. Necessary changes will be communicated to you through your faculty advisor.

Step 9: Submit Final Paper

After completion of the oral defense, complete the revisions discussed with your faculty advisor. Submit the revised manuscript to your faculty advisor. Ensure your manuscript conforms to the guidelines outlined in the UNLV Graduate Handbook. Upon acceptance of your manuscript, your advisor completes the *Approval of Professional Paper Form* or *Approval of Special Project Form (TBD)*. Submit two formatted, bound copies of your paper and a disk copy to your faculty advisor. One hard copy and a disk copy will be submitted to the Department by your advisor.

Capstone Project Checklist

Section 1.01

Step 1. Contact Faculty Advisor

Faculty Advisor is the individual who will supervise your capstone project.

Step 2. Project Selection

Determine with your faculty advisor the type of capstone project to pursue:

- Independent research project (Plan A: Master's Professional Paper)
- Special project (Plan B: Agency Collaborative Project)

See Appendix A for examples of past capstone projects.

Step 3. Prospectus

Submit a 1-page overview of your project plan to your Faculty Advisor. This process should be initiated by the 12th week of Module 2.

Step 4. Project Approval

- Upon approval of project plan, you and your faculty advisor will complete the *Capstone Project Request Form (TBD)*. This form must be submitted no later than the 12th week of Module 2.
- Set a date with your faculty advisor for submitting your capstone proposal (e.g. draft literature review plus method/project plan).

Note. Failure to complete steps according to agreed upon dates may result in the cancellation of this project by your advisor.

Step 5. Proposal

- Submit the draft proposal to your faculty advisor.
- Revise proposal according to feedback of faculty advisor.
- Complete OPRS approval process, if applicable.
- Submit final proposal with appropriate cover page
- Student and Advisor submit *Approval of Professional Paper Proposal Form (TBD)* or *Approval of Special Project Approval Form (TBD)*.

Step 6. Planning & Execution

Create a project management plan including a formal timeline for completing project activities (e.g., recruitment of subjects, meeting with agency representatives). See Appendix B.

Note. Failure to complete steps according to agreed upon dates may result in the cancellation of this project by your advisor

Step 7. Draft of Completed Project

- a) Submit draft of final paper according to date set in project management plan.
- b) Revise paper according to advisor feedback.

Step 8. Oral Defense

- a) Schedule date and time for oral defense during the last on-campus session. This includes your primary faculty advisor and committee member.
- b) Provide copies of the revised paper to all evaluation team members one week prior to the oral defense.

Step 9. Submit Final Paper

- a) Revise paper after oral defense as directed by committee.
- b) Submit final paper to your advisor in appropriate format
- c) Student and advisor submit *Approval of Professional paper Form* or *Approval of Special Project Form (TBD)*.
- d) Provide two formatted bound copies and a disk copy to your faculty advisor. One hard copy and a disk copy will be submitted to the Department.

Appendix A

Examples of Graduate Capstone Projects

Professional Paper

Evaluate the impacts of implementing an emergency management policy plank in the national platform of: The National League of Cities; National Association of Counties; Council of State Governments; National Governors Association; or, National Council of State Legislatures, at the municipal, county, state, federal, or tribal level.

After 20 years since its effective date, do the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act provisions have relevance today?

Select one target capability from the Department of Homeland Security's Target Capability List. Assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of its status quo within a municipal, county, state, federal, or tribal government and what must be done to sustain the capability or address deficiencies in the capability's definition.

Special Project

Assess the status of statutes and ordinances pertinent to an emergency management agency (EMA) for conformance with the Emergency Management Accreditation Program and recommend enhancements or revisions necessary to facilitate the accreditation process.

Evaluate the EMA and jurisdiction's compliance with NIMS implementation and recommend solutions to overcome implementation barriers.

Design, conduct, evaluate, review, and recommend corrective actions in a functional exercise on behalf of the EMA.

Appendix B

Sample Project Management Plan

1. Contact Emergency Management Agencies to Solicit Participation (*date*)
 - a. Obtain a letter of participation from the EMA (*by date*)
2. Seek Human Subjects Approval
 - a. Complete the IRB application and submit to faculty advisor (*by date*)
 - b. Revise IRB application and submit to the IRB (*by date*)
 - c. Attend IRB meeting on *date*.
3. Prepare and administer survey materials (*date through date*)
 - a. Make copies of surveys and cover letters
 - b. Prepare pre-paid self-addressed envelopes
 - c. Schedule date to administer surveys to subjects
 - d. Distribute surveys
4. Assess the number of surveys returned and send reminders to subjects if needed (*by date*)
5. Enter data into spreadsheet and conduct preliminary analyses (*date*)
 - a. Meet with faculty advisor to review data and preliminary analyses (*by date*)
 - b. Conduct follow-up analyses per faculty suggestions
6. Write up draft of results and discussion (*date*)
 - a. Submit draft to faculty advisor (*by date*)
 - b. Meet with faculty advisor to discuss feedback (*date*)
 - c. Revise based on faculty advisor's feedback (*by date*)
7. Submit final completed paper to faculty advisor (*by date*)
 - a. Revise method section to reflect project completion
 - b. Format according to professional paper guidelines
 - c. Schedule oral defense