

Wesleyan University Graduate Liberal Studies



Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Capstone Guidelines Fall 2021 Spring 2022 Summer 2022

Subject to change without notice. Updated 10/12/2021

Overview

MALS degree candidates may choose to complete a Capstone as the final course of the degree. It is an advanced program of independent study within the student's area of concentration, in which the student produces a 30-page critical essay based on academic research, or a creative or scientific project accompanied by a 20-page analytical essay.

The MALS Capstone is an opportunity to pursue, in depth, a topic, issue, or project of the student's choosing, under the guidance of a faculty member. It is an essay or project providing evidence of the student's ability to independently produce, organize, and complete a graduate-level scholarly or creative work for academic credit.

Essay

The MALS Capstone essay is a written work of approximately 30 pages in length, to allow the student to fully introduce and develop the topic, to incorporate the relevant literature (as applicable), and to summarize the conclusions. The essay must be completed under the supervision of a qualified faculty advisor.

Project

The MALS Capstone project may take many forms: creative writing; performance; theatre, film, or video production; experimentation/investigation; artistic exhibition, etc. It may be an original body of art, a creative performance, or a laboratory science study. The MALS project may be used to demonstrate artistic or creative ability. Examples of MALS projects in this area could include an art portfolio of new pieces, a music or dance performance, a play production, or a film. The MALS project in the area of writing could include a collection of poems, short stories, a short novel, a screenplay, or other creative writing.

Analytical Paper to Accompany Project

An analytical paper of approximately 20 pages must accompany the master's project. This written analytical component explains the nature of the project, incorporates the relevant literature in the field, and analyzes the work in its artistic and academic context. The academic analysis is meant to present what the work does/argues and why; it is not meant to answer questions about personal inspiration, how your feelings have changed over time, or other such non-academic topics. Personal narratives may be appropriate in the creative component. In the academic component, however, your responsibility is to explore the academic relevance, critical success, and intellectual significance of the creative work. For example, the paper for a painting project might include research on and references to artists or styles that influence the student's technique, or a subject or theme on which the work is based. The paper accompanying a choreography project might include research on a particular dance style, choreographer, or an event in dance history.

Project Documentation

Students who complete a master's project must submit audio or video recordings, photographs, slides, charts, programs, gallery lists, and/or other appropriate forms of documentation. Field projects might include a research-style manuscript and/or videos, photographs, charts, computer files, or other appropriate forms of documentation. The faculty advisor must view the performance or studio work, preferably in person. Whenever possible, the GLS director or designee should also attend a show or performance.

The Proposal Process

Step-by-step Timeline with resources and accountabilities on pp. 9-10

After doing some initial research on your proposed topic, you will arrange a meeting with the Assistant Director for Continuing Studies (AD, Continuing Studies). From this meeting, you will end up with a more concrete subject. Please note: it is the student's responsibility to identify an advisor in an appropriate field. The AD, Continuing Studies will discuss your choice for advisor, or your ideas about potential advisors, when you meet. You will then meet with the GLS Writing Consultant. During your appointment with the GLS Writing Consultant, you will review the work you have prepared. This is the appropriate time for you to receive objective feedback on the writing and the construction of the proposal. The Writing Consultant may subsequently choose to meet with your advisor to ensure that your project proposal meets the advisor's expectations.

Following these meetings, you will prepare a brief abstract, preliminary bibliography, and brief outline, which will be reviewed by the AD, Continuing Studies, before you approach a possible advisor. These will help you to convince the faculty member, when you present the documents to them, of the value of your project and of your ability to accomplish your goals.

Now you will be ready to approach a potential advisor. If the advisor agrees to advise you, you will contact the AD, Continuing Studies, who will reach out to the advisor to finalize his or her participation. Once a faculty member has agreed to serve as your advisor, you will both set up a timetable for meetings and submission of drafts. This timetable is a required component of the proposal. It is your responsibility to keep your advisor apprised of your progress. In most cases, students and advisors need to meet two to four times in the proposal stage: initially, to finalize a topic, then to review drafts. Keep in mind that your advisor must have enough time to read and evaluate your work before returning it to you with comments, and that you will need time to incorporate those comments. You should also be prepared for the possibility that your advisor will request significant changes to every draft, including your proposed final version. Your advisor and the Writing Consultant may meet to review your draft proposal to ensure that both content and style guidelines are met. Lastly, you will submit your final proposal for consideration the GLS Director.

Once you have obtained sign-off from your advisor on the content of the Capstone and their

availability to be your advisor, you will request a link to the online Proposal Form from the Assistant Director of Continuing Studies. You will need to attach all of your documents and a copy of the email from your advisor to the proposal. After your proposal is approved, you will be enrolled in your Capstone course.

Choosing a Topic

You will be spending a lot of time with your chosen topic, so reflect carefully, and choose a topic of compelling, sustainable interest to you.

Requirements:

- The topic must be within your area of concentration
- The topic must be compatible with Wesleyan's liberal arts curriculum
- There must be an appropriate faculty member who is available and willing to be an advisor. Advisors can be members of the Wesleyan University faculty or GLS visiting lecturers within the two years
- The topic must be approved by the GLS director

Where to begin:

The most successful MALS Capstones usually arise from ideas developed in previous coursework. You should think back through your GLS courses for ideas and topics that can be developed into a graduate level essay or project. Choosing a topic in which you have already done some research will make the essay or project much more manageable, because you already have a base of knowledge and research from which to draw.

You may also choose to consult with faculty members about ideas. In addition, you are welcome to examine previous master's essays/projects in the Olin Library archives (in closed stacks; advance request required). Many liberal arts topics in your concentration area may be chosen for the MALS Capstone. However, professional projects such as business plans, instruction manuals, or purely technical descriptions are not consistent with Wesleyan's curriculum and may not be approved for the essay or project. Areas of inquiry not taught at Wesleyan may not be approved.

Note: The publishing/binding requirement has been discontinued for MALS Capstones and M.Phil. Theses.

Choosing a Faculty Advisor

The MALS Capstone must be completed under the guidance of a faculty advisor with expertise in the student's chosen topic. The faculty advisor serves as the expert on the academic subject and discipline-specific style.

Requirements:

- The advisor must be
 - A member of the Wesleyan faculty
 - A visiting faculty member who has taught at Wesleyan within the previous calendar year
 - A GLS visiting lecturer who has offered a course in the program within two years prior to starting work on the proposal
- The advisor's area of expertise must be within the student's area of concentration
- The advisor must be available to serve as an advisor throughout the entire process
- The advisor must be approved by the GLS director

The best place to begin is with your previous GLS instructors. During your initial meeting with the GLS writing consultant and assistant director for academic and administrative services, you will brainstorm possible advisors. Choosing a faculty advisor with whom you have previously studied is strongly encouraged because the faculty member is already familiar with your academic work and you are already familiar with his or her expectations and critical methods.

If it is not possible to work with a previous GLS instructor, you will need to find a faculty member or recent GLS instructor who has expertise in the area of your Capstone essay or project.

Once someone has provisionally agreed to serve as your advisor, notify the AD, Continuing Studies at masters@wesleyan.edu so that crucial administrative information can be sent to your advisor.

Student-Advisor Relationship and Responsibilities

The student and faculty advisor will work together from the development of the initial proposal through to the completion of the final revisions. It is important for both the student and the advisor to understand their responsibilities, to ensure that the student-advisor relationship is successful.

The faculty advisor should:

- Ensure that the student's proposal is sufficiently detailed so that it communicates the intent and viability of the proposed topic;
- Ensure that the student is meeting the goals of the proposal during the development of the official draft;

- Serve as an academic subject expert to the student, helping to identify source materials, etc.;
- Assist the student in meeting the requirements of the style manual used for the particular essay or project (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian), unless other arrangements are made with the student. Please note that students should always use the latest edition of any publication style manual.

The student should:

- Ask the advisor for help when necessary
- Implement changes suggested by the advisor
- Keep in contact with the advisor on a regular basis, as agreed upon, in your timetable

Structure

The proposal is the foundation on which the essay or project is developed. You should view the proposal not as just a description of what you intend to accomplish in the MALS Capstone, but as the first step in the development of the work. The proposal should be a detailed document that incorporates research, coursework, and timeframes for completion. In addition to serving as a guide to the student throughout the development of the master's essay or project, a thoroughly-developed proposal also demonstrates to the GLS director that you have a clear vision and plan for accomplishing your goals.

Publication Style Manual Guidelines

Students should select the style manual appropriate to their discipline (i.e., APA, MLA, Chicago Style, or Turabian) and should follow the style manual for the proposal as well as the final work. Students should pay particular attention to and adhere to the style manual requirements in the following areas (this list is not intended to be all encompassing):

- Title page (see page 14 of this handbook)
- Copyright page (optional)
- Preface or acknowledgements
- Margins
- Table of contents
- Chapters (headers)
- Footnotes or endnotes
- Use and placement of quotes and punctuation
- References, bibliography, list of works cited/consulted
- Citations
- Figures (charts, graphs, maps, photos, drawings) and tables
- Appendices

Copies of the style manuals below can typically be found in libraries or can be purchased at a bookstore such as Wesleyan R. J. Julia Books, 413 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06459; (860) 685-3939. The below list of references follows the APA publication style manual.

American Psychological Association. (2001). Publication manual of the American psychological association (5th ed.). New York, NY: American Psychological Association.

Gibaldi, J. (1998). MLA style manual and guide to scholarly publishing. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: The Modern Language Associate of America.

Grossman, J. (1993) (Ed.). The Chicago manual of style: The essential guide for writers, editors, and publishers. (14th ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Turabian, K. L. (1996). A manual for writers of term papers, term papers, theses, and dissertations. (6th ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Proposal Requirements

A proposal must include all the following components:

Title page (1 page)

The title page must include a working title, formatted exactly as the sample (found on page 14).

Proposal (2-1/2 to 4 pages)

1. Abstract (3 or 4 sentences)

In one paragraph, state the central question, theme, or problem your essay or project will address. Do not use generalizations—state your issue in the form of a developed thesis statement.

2. Development of topic

Provide a detailed description of the topic and the academic context (i.e., the problems or issues in the field that the essay/project will address). This discussion may include a description of a hypothesis, anticipated results, process, product, artistic direction planned, or expected findings.

3. Methodology

Have a discussion with your advisor about the structure and format of the methodology you'll be expected to use. Address the academic disciplines from which you will draw and explain which of these disciplines will inform the methodology you use. Provide a detailed description of the methods of inquiry and analysis.

4. Literature review: analysis of scholarly context

Review the available literature on the topic: what is already known about the topic? What is not known? How does this information relate to the proposed work?

5. Wesleyan Resources

Meet with a reference librarian who can discuss your topic with you and direct you to the library resources available at Wesleyan that will support your project. Please also list any faculty you hope to use as a resource.

Appendices (in addition to the above)

1. Timetable

Document the key milestones required to complete the MALS Capstone in a specified timeframe and provide a description of how you will interact with your faculty advisor: schedule of meetings, timeframe for response and feedback, key dates to deliver information for review, review for publication style compliance, etc.

2. Bibliography (2 to 4 pages)

Preliminary list of the source materials to be used (libraries, readings, references, labs, field area, etc.), documented using one of the publication styles (i.e., APA, MLA, Chicago, or Turabian).

3. All documents required for IRB approval (required only if student plans to use human subjects as data)

Timeline: Capstone Submission and Review

Students may submit the proposal for the MALS Capstone as early as during their tenth or eleventh GLS course, but no later than 6 weeks prior to the start of the term in which the work will be done.

Students are expected to complete the MALS Capstone in one term; this should be the final course toward the degree. If, due to unusual & extraordinary circumstances, a MALS Capstone student is unable to complete the essay or project during that one term, the student may petition to continue into the following term. No extensions will be granted beyond the two-term maximum. Students who do not complete the final work may register for a final course inside their area of concentration, as long as this is still within the maximum six-year period of eligibility (up to eight years by petition) and also within three terms of finishing the eleventh course.

Step	When	Action	Resource(s) you will work with
01.	13-15 weeks prior to start of term	Do initial research on your proposed topic.	
02.	11-12 weeks prior to the start of the term	<p>Meet with AD, Continuing Studies: From this meeting, you will end up with a more concrete subject and you will also have identified at least one potential advisor in an appropriate field.</p> <p>Prepare Draft 1 of proposal: You will prepare a brief abstract, preliminary bibliography and brief outline before approaching a possible advisor. These will help you to convince the faculty member, when you present the documents to them, of the value of your project as well as your ability to accomplish your goals.</p> <p>Send Draft 1 of proposal to Assistant Director: You will send your proposal to the AD, Continuing Studies for approval (or revisions).</p>	AD, Continuing Studies
03.	9-10 weeks before the start of term	<p>Feedback from the Writing Consultant: The GLS office will send your draft to the Writing Consultant and will help to set up an appointment for you to meet if needed. This is the appropriate time for you to receive objective feedback on the writing and the construction of the proposal. The Writing Consultant may subsequently choose to meet with your advisor to ensure that your project proposal meets the advisor's expectations.</p>	Writing Consultant
04.	5-8 weeks before the start of term	<p>Update Draft 1 of proposal based on feedback from the Writing Consultant.</p> <p>Send Draft 2 of proposal to the AD, Continuing Studies: The Assistant Director and the Director of Continuing Studies will review draft 2 of your proposal and approve or request revisions.</p> <p>Once the Writing Consultant and the AD, Continuing Studies have approved your proposal, approach a</p>	Faculty Advisor AD, Continuing Studies

		<p>potential advisor Once you find an advisor interested in working with you, you will contact the AD, Continuing Studies, who will reach out to the advisor to finalize his or her participation.</p> <p>Meet with Advisor to work on proposal: In most cases, students and advisors need to meet two to four times in the proposal stage: initially, to finalize a topic, then to review drafts</p> <p>Set up a timetable with advisor: You will work with your Advisor to build a timetable for meetings and submission of drafts. This timetable is a required component of the proposal. It is your responsibility to keep your advisor apprised of your progress. Keep in mind that your advisor must have enough time to read and evaluate your work before returning it to you with comments, and that you will need time to incorporate those comments. You should also be prepared for the possibility that your advisor will request significant changes to every draft, including your proposed final version.</p> <p>Your advisor and the Writing Consultant may meet to review your draft proposal to ensure that both content and style guidelines are met.</p>	
05.	4 weeks before the start of term	<p>Submit final draft of proposal: Finalize your Proposal based on feedback from your Advisor, the Writing Consultant, and the AD, Continuing Studies</p> <p>Your proposal will be reviewed by the AD, Continuing Studies.</p>	Individual Effort and AD, Continuing Studies
06.	1-3 weeks before the start of term	<p>Submit Final Proposal</p> <p>The AD, Continuing Studies will send you a link to the GLS Online Proposal Form. Submit your proposal and all attachments via the online petition form.</p> <p>The GLS Director will approve or deny the project based on the proposal submitted in light of the</p>	N/A – Individual Effort

		<p>previous comments from the advisor and the Writing Consultant.</p> <p>If your proposal is approved: Congratulations! You will be instructed by the office on how to enroll in your Capstone.</p> <p>If your proposal is denied: You may register for a course offered that term to complete the degree.</p>	
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Please note: all meetings with the Writing Consultant and the Assistant Director of Graduate Liberal Studies (and most likely your advisor, as well) may be held via phone or online meeting (Zoom, Skype, etc.).

07.	Throughout the term	Work to complete Capstone, meeting with your advisor according to your approved timetable.	Faculty Advisor
07.1	By end of term	<p><i>For those completing a Capstone in summer or fall:</i></p> <p>By last day of classes in term (or other date approved by advisor and GLS) Hand in completed MALS Capstone to advisor.</p>	Faculty Advisor
07.2	By end of term	<p><i>For graduating students completing a Capstone in spring:</i></p> <p>By close of early grading period for graduating students Hand in completed MALS Capstone to advisor.</p>	Faculty Advisor
08.	By end of term	<p>Prior to Commencement</p> <p>Submit one digital copy (preferably by email to masters@wesleyan.edu) to the GLS office to be kept in your file.</p>	N/A Individual Effort

Making Changes After Approval of Final Proposal

Some of the most powerful learning opportunities in a Capstone occur during the development and finalization of Capstone proposals. The proposal is not intended to be a restrictive or inflexible document. It should serve as a guide for both the creative Capstone and

the research Capstone. During the discovery and exploration of your topic, you may need to shift direction. In this case, the faculty advisor must be consulted, and you must explain in the final work the reasons for moving from the original premise or assumptions.

Use of Human Research Subjects

If your topic involves the use of human subjects (i.e., if you will interview and/or photograph people, etc.), you will need to get approval from Wesleyan's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The need for IRB approval extends to any manner of research, including experiments, interviews, surveys, and other data collecting methods. This process is designed to protect the rights and welfare of human participants by ensuring that they are selected equitably, participating voluntarily, fully informed of the risks and benefits of the research, and that the research minimizes risks to humans and protects their privacy and confidentiality.

Most proposals will be granted an expedited IRB review. However, if the proposed research presents particular concerns, it will be subject to a full board review. The full process for submitting all projects to the IRB can be found online at wesleyan.edu/acaf/support/reviewboard.html. Your proposal to GLS should include all the information you intend to submit to the IRB. After your proposal has been approved by GLS, you will submit the proposal to the IRB.

The IRB must be notified of any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others, including physical or psychological injury to subjects, improper disclosure of private information, economic loss, or other potentially harmful occurrences.

Completing the Capstone Essay or Project

Submission of the Essay or Project

Once the Capstone is completed and approved by the advisor, you must submit one digital copy to the GLS office (preferably by email to masters@wesleyan.edu) to be kept in your file.

Sample Title Page

A sample title page, formatted as your page should be formatted, appears on page 14 of this handbook.

Completion

Once the essay or project is approved and graded, credit will be awarded. Provided that all other degree requirements have been met, the student's program is considered completed. Please note that students graduate and diplomas are issued only during the annual spring

commencement, held in late May. For letters of completion prior to commencement, students must submit a written request to the director via email to masters@wesleyan.edu, allowing 2 to 4 weeks following grade submission for requests to be processed. For an official transcript, students should submit a transcript request online at wesleyan.edu/registrar/forms/transcript_request.html. Language stating that the degree was awarded appears on transcripts printed only after commencement in May.

Protecting Intellectual Property (optional)

Students might want to copyright their MALS Capstone. Students can provide some level of copyright protection by inserting a single page that contains only the copyright information in the front of the document. The copyright information should be centered in the middle of the page, detailed as follows:

Copyright 2018 © Jane E. Smith

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

(The title page is not numbered. The font, type size, and style should be the same as in the manuscript (no bolding). Below is an example of the GLS format for the Final Essay/Project Proposal and Official Draft cover sheet. Please note: the font size should be 11 or 12 depending on your publication guide.)

HUMANISM, MODERNISM, IDEALISM, AND THE DANCE ART OF DORIS HUMPHREY

by

Jane E. Smith

Submitted to Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies.

March 2019

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