

Master of Science in Health Informatics and Information Management

HINT 799: Capstone in Health Information Management

Capstone Guidebook

(2023-2025)

Guidelines for the Preparation of Master’s Thesis or Project

(Including Intent Form and Sample Intent Narrative)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3

FAQs 5

Written Report 6

Oral Presentation 6

Evaluation of Project 7

Assessment or Oral Presentation Form 9

Getting Started 10

Capstone Intent Form 11

Capstone Intent Form—Narrative Outline 13

Timeline for Thesis/Project Completion 14

**Introduction**

As part of the Master of Science in Health Informatics and Information Management (MS HIIM) program, students will be required to complete a Master’s Thesis or Project as a condition of graduation. This is known as the capstone.

The Davenport University Master’s Thesis and Project Handbook serves as a guide for graduate students within the department of Health Information Management. Your MSHIIM program will culminate with the completion of the Capstone Experience course (HINT 799), which is taken during your last seven-week session.

A thesis or project is designed to provide an opportunity to apply and integrate the knowledge and skills that were gained during the entire MSHIIM program. This is an opportunity to merge learning with real world experience. An understanding of the capstone experience is very important because some preliminary work is to be completed while enrolled in other MSHIIM courses. The program director must approve the topic and research being done prior to the process starting.

* **Thesis:** The thesis is an option for the capstone of the MSHIIM program. The thesis project will consist of original research on any topic fitting into a current American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) domain; these are listed in the next section of this guide. A final written report is required along with an oral presentation and defense of the thesis.
  + It is important to note this is a thesis not a dissertation which is usually done at the doctoral level. [Here](http://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/64C6D277/What-Is-the-Difference-Between-a-Thesis-and-a-Dissertation/) is a good summary highlighting the differences between a thesis and a dissertation: *“A master’s degree thesis is more closely related to a research paper that you would have completed during college. You are expected only to use the research of others (although you can perform original research) and provide your own analysis on your discoveries. It demonstrates your level of critical and analytical thinking and defines the subject that you are most interested in pursuing within your field. With a dissertation, you are expected to use the research of others only to guide you in your own research to come up with a completely new hypothesis.”*
* **Project:** The project is also an option for the capstone of the MSHIIM program. The capstone project will focus on a real-world health information, health information systems or health informatics (see AHIMA domains in the next section) setting and application of problem-solving methods for development of solutions (most likely students would work in conjunction with their employer or an organization seeking to partner with the university). A final written report is required along with an oral presentation and defense of project.  In addition, the student will be expected to include a literature review related to the project.

Both will involve an investigation of a current issue, trend, problem, or opportunity for a department, company, or industry. They will entail extensive research of published sources (secondary information) and may include gathering primary data, as well.

Primary data could be gathered through focus groups, in-depth interviews, or a telephone or mail survey, however, this may present some additional tasks that could result in an enhanced research learning experience. First, the student must become thoroughly knowledgeable in the use of the method through independent study. Second, desired survey respondents may not be available. Finally, design of a primary research study must be approved by the [University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB)](https://my.davenport.edu/irb). This includes sample selection, questionnaire design, and methods of analysis. Student’s must be logged into Davenport’s web page to view the provided IRB link.

Keep in mind certain topics may require students to assess the business strategies of real-world organizations. Because companies (including Davenport University) generally hold such strategic information confidential, students will be challenged to use secondary research and analytical reasoning to draw conclusions about strategic direction.

The following are the Domains that can be investigated for the thesis/project. See AHIMA’s [web page](https://www.ahima.org/media/hykh3n2k/2020-hiim-domains.pdf) for a listing of subdomains.

* Domain I. Data Structure, Content, and Information Governance
* Domain II. Information Protection: Access, Disclosure, Archival, Privacy & Security
* Domain III. Informatics, Analytics, and Data Use
* Domain IV. Revenue Cycle Management
* Domain V. Health Law Compliance
* Domain VI. Organizational Management and Leadership
* Domain VII. Clinical Foundations
* Domain VIII. Evolving Topics/Other Relevant Topics

A final, official Intent Form and Narrative must be received and approved at least six weeks before enrolling in the course. A preliminary intent form may be completed in IAAS 600 or HINT 760. The purpose of the Intent Form is to describe the nature of the thesis/project.

If your proposed topic will contain content from a paper that was written for another class, it must involve extensive additional research, or it will be considered plagiarism. Plagiarism is grounds for dismissal from the University.

This [page](https://davenport.libguides.com/capstones/hint#s-lg-box-13192935) in our library contains very helpful research suggestions for the capstone project. You may a find information on project titles at other universities. For example, here are some examples of research topics in HIM from the University of Tennessee: [Research Topics in HIIM](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uiaAgdKCgQ2gWPo9tcJ3Uu4M_TpAgu0us_fcIKVrcvw/edit?usp=sharing)

We welcome any comments that would be helpful for the update of this guidebook. If we have not answered all your questions, reach out to the MS HIIM program director: [Joseph C. Brown, DHA, CHDA](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TGkF-YN_Id5omNx8k__-cnoOCpGr6qWWPjTk4HAcWY8/edit?usp=sharing) (jbrown193@davenport.edu).

**FAQs About the Capstone Experience Course**

**Q: What is the Capstone Experience?**

A: The culminating experience in the MSHIM Program at Davenport University is the Capstone Experience course. It involves completing a research thesis/project. The Capstone course is taken during your final session at DU. Planning for it takes place well before the student’s last session.

**Q: What is the purpose of the Capstone Experience?**

A: The purpose of this course is to integrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained from several courses in the MSHIM program.

**Q: What is the process to complete the Capstone?**

A: You will first choose a topic and complete the Capstone Intent Form. Once this has been approved, you will continue to develop your capstone thesis/project in several of your HINT courses. Once your preliminary work has been accepted, you may then register for the Capstone course and complete your thesis/project.

**Q: Can I choose any topic for my thesis?**

A: The capstone experience topic must be related to health information management/informatics and encompass material that was covered in the MSHIIM curriculum.

**Q: Who should I contact for more information about the course?**

A: Your advisor can provide basic information. Questions regarding the academic content of the course should be directed to course faculty or your thesis/project chair.

**Q: Can I take the Capstone course prior to finishing the rest of my course requirements**?

A: The Capstone Experience can be taken only as the last course in the graduate program. Although one course may be taken concurrently with the Capstone, such action is not recommended. A grade of “B” or better in the class is required for graduation. The Capstone Experience can be repeated only once.

**Q: Is it too early to begin to discuss my Capstone project ideas?**

A: It is never too early to discuss the Capstone. The sooner you begin to formulate ideas, the better prepared you will be before enrolling in the course. The required paperwork can be submitted initially in IAAS 600 and HINT 760. Any changes must be submitted no later than the semester prior to enrolling in the capstone session.

**Q: When does my Capstone topic become “official?”**

A: After you complete a Capstone Intent Form (attached) and a narrative which describes your thesis/project, secured approval from the faculty advisor who will facilitate the course, and scheduled for the class with your student advisor, you may begin preliminary work that involves published sources. The topic must be approved at least one session before the capstone begins. The Intent Form is not a contract, so if you wish to change your project, you may do so with another Intent Form and narrative.

**Q: Are there assignments that will be considered in grading besides the thesis?**

A: These will be explained in your professor’s syllabus, if required.

**Q: What is a thesis statement?**

A: A thesis statement declares what you believe and intend to demonstrate. A thesis paper describes a problem and contains a thesis statement. The remainder of the paper then contains material to focus on the problem and sustain the thesis statement.

**Q: What does the preliminary work entail?**

A: You will be required to take: HINT 760 Research Methods in HIM. In HINT 760 Research Methods in HIM, you will refine your topic, literature review, methods, and begin data collection. Once your work product has been accepted by your faculty advisor, you will be allowed to proceed into the succeeding HINT 799 Capstone course.

**Q: What is the difference between a proposal and a thesis paper?**

A: In simple terms, the amount of work completed. The proposal is a substantial amount of work completed toward your final thesis paper. In your proposal, you should have completed much of the background research, framed your introduction around your thesis statement, written much of your literature review, described the method to be used (if primary research will be conducted), and provided a timeline toward completing the remainder of your thesis.

**Written Report**

Below is a brief outline of the thesis. APA style is to be used.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Thesis/Project** |
| Purpose | Test or validate knowledge by conducting research |
| APA (Current ed.) | Required |
| Title Page | Required |
| Abstract | Required |
| Introduction | Chapter 1 Introduction \*This section must include the research question/s |
| Literature Review | Chapter 2 Literature Review |
| Methods | Chapter 3 Methodology (will vary depending on the topic and project) \*a sample layout of the data collection tool must be included in this section. |
| Data Analysis /Results | Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Results (will vary depending on the topic/project) |
| Discussion and Conclusion | Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion \*In addition, this section must discuss the limitations of the project along with recommendations for future research. |
| References | Required |
| Appendices | Required \*additional results focused graphs, tables, and the completed/filled out data collection tool must be in this section. |
| Proposal | Required |
| Oral Examination/Presentation | Required |
| Supporting Courses | IAAS 600, HINT 760 |

**Oral Presentation**

Students deliver an oral presentation of their findings upon completion of the course using PowerPoint slides. PowerPoint slides (6 slides per page) are to be included in the written report. The oral presentation may be completed via conference call or online presentation, depending on the delivery method of the course. The program director will work with individual students to setup a time within their final semester for this occur. Family, friends, and coworkers are welcome to attend. If a project is done, the instructor might request key players from the project’s organization to be present.

**Evaluation of the Project**

The written report and oral presentation are evaluated based on the attributes below. Students should use this as a checklist for self-evaluation.

Assessment of Written Assignments

**A Paper (Exemplary):**

1. Complies fully with the assignment. Information clearly and effectively supports a central purpose or thesis and displays a thoughtful, in-depth analysis of a sufficiently limited topic. The reader gains insights.
2. Is directed towards and meets the needs of a defined audience (is persuasive or argumentative).
3. Begins, flows, and ends effectively. The introduction, body and conclusion of the paper are sound.
4. Provides compelling supporting arguments, evidence, examples and details. The use of supporting detail is embedded in a context of discussion.
5. Is well-organized and unified with ideas and sentences that relate to the main topic. The ideas are arranged logically to support the thesis.
6. Uses appropriate, direct language: the writing is compelling; the sentences are well-phrased and varied in length and structure. Paragraphs are well-structured, use of headings is excellent, and the paper shows strong organization.
7. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text citations, works cited pages, etc.).
8. Is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format.
9. Maintains a level of excellence throughout and shows originality and creativity in realizing 1-6.

**B Paper (Proficient):**

1. Complies in a competent manner with the assignment. Information provides firm support for a central purpose or thesis and displays evidence of a basic analysis of a sufficiently limited topic. The paper demonstrates overall competency. It shows some originality, creativity, and/or genuine engagement with issues at hand.
2. Is directed towards and meets the needs of a defined audience (is persuasive, argumentative, or informational).
3. Begins, flows, and ends effectively. The introduction, body and conclusion of the paper are adequate.
4. Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples and details. The use of supporting detail is embedded in a context of discussion.
5. Is well-organized and unified with sentences that relate to the main topic. The ideas are arranged logically to support the thesis. Paragraphs are well-structured, use of headings is good, and the paper shows general organization and flow.
6. Is comprised of well-phrased sentences which are varied in length and structure. There are occasional violations in the writing, but they don’t present a major distraction or obscure the meaning.
7. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text citations, works cited pages, etc.).
8. Contains minimal errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format.

**C Paper (Marginal):**

1. Complies adequately with the assignment. Information supports the thesis at times. Analysis is basic or general. The purpose is not always clear. The paper completes (rather than engages in) the assignment.
2. Presents an unclear (either persuasive or argumentative) rhetorical position.
3. Has partial or inadequate introduction and conclusion.
4. Does not provide adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples and/or details.
5. Is not arranged logically. Ideas fail to make sense and are not expressed clearly. The reader can figure out what the writer probably intends, but may not be motivated to do so.
6. Contains some awkwardly constructed sentences which present an occasional distraction for the reader. Paragraphs are unstructured, headings are missing, and general organization and flow is lacking.
7. Incorrectly or partially acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text citations, works cited pages, etc.). Although occasional references are provided, the writer relies on unsubstantiated statements. The reader is confused about the source of ideas.
8. Contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format, which is distracting to the reader.

**F Paper (Unacceptable):**

1. Does not adequately comply with the assignment. The paper does not successfully identify the thesis. Analysis is vague or not evident.
2. Has no rhetorical position.
3. Has an inadequate introduction and conclusion.
4. Does not provide adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples and/or details. Paragraphs may “string together” quotations without a context of discussion.
5. Is not arranged logically. Frequently, ideas fail to make sense and are not expressed clearly. The reader cannot identify a line of reasoning.
6. Contains frequent errors in sentence structure, which present a major distraction to the reader. Paragraphs are unstructured, headings are missing, and the paper lacks general organization and flow.
7. Incorrectly or partially acknowledges and documents sources in APA style (e.g., in-text citations, works cited pages, etc.). Although occasional references are provided, the writer relies on unsubstantiated statements. The reader is confused about the source of ideas.
8. Contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format, which obscure the meaning of the passage. The reader is confused and stops reading.

**Assessment of Oral Presentation Student Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Criteria** |
| **100% - 90%** | Clear, succinct and complete. Concepts described fully and communicated effectively. Strong preparation. Held audience attention. Visually acceptable. Showed ability to persuade audience. Strong organization and flow. Presented in a rational, logical order—used and followed an agenda. Provided appropriate solutions for defined problems. No spelling or grammatical errors. Excellent incorporation of sources and references into presentation. Met time requirements for presentation. Fielded audience questions very effectively. |
| **89% - 80%** | Mostly clear, succinct and complete. Concepts described and communicated fairly well. Adequate preparation. Held audience attention. Visually acceptable. Showed ability to persuade audience. Good organization and flow. Presented in a rational, logical order—used and followed an agenda. Provided adequate solutions for defined problems. Very few spelling or grammatical errors. Good incorporation of sources and references into presentation. Met time requirements for presentation. Fielded audience questions well. |
| **79% - 70%** | Information presented not always clear or succinct. Concepts not described fully or communicated effectively. Did not hold audience attention. Weak preparation. Lacked ability to persuade audience. Weak organization and flow. Many spelling or grammatical errors. Sources and references not always used or cited properly in presentation. Did not meet time requirements for presentation. Did not respond effectively to audience questions. |
| **69% - 60%** | Information presented not clear or succinct. Concepts not described or communicated effectively. Did not hold audience attention. Weak preparation. Lacked ability to persuade audience. Weak organization and flow. Unacceptable number of spelling or grammatical errors. Sources and references not cited properly or used at all in presentation. Did not meet time requirements for presentation. Did not respond adequately to audience questions. |

**Comments:**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Grade: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Final Grade**

The lowest passing grade in this course is “B.” All course requirements must be submitted on or before the last day of the session. An Incomplete (“I”) grade is only submitted in extreme circumstances. Please refer to the Graduate Catalog for the policy on Incompletes. Students who do not pass the course may repeat it once with a different topic.

**Getting Started**

Below is the process to get started with the course:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step 1 | Schedule for the pre-requisite classes |
|  | All course work must be completed prior to taking HINT 799. In IAAS 600 and HINT 760, students will provide deliverables related to the final thesis/project. It is the student’s responsibility to secure approval of the project from the professor as per the guidelines in this handbook |
| Step 2 | Submit and secure approval of the Intent Form and project narrative |
|  | During IAAS 600, students complete a preliminary Intent Form. Students may change their topic, but it must be approved by their thesis/project chair at least one semester prior to enrolling in HINT 760. They must complete the Intent Form (attached) and a narrative that describes the project. A sample of a narrative is provided later in this guidebook. |
| Step 3 | Gather and study information for the project |
|  | As soon as the Intent Form and narrative are approved, begin gathering published information for the project. This would include securing books and articles about your topic, reading them, and noting relevant information. If the project involves focus groups, interviews, or a survey, do not begin this phase until you secure approval of the research design from the professor. In addition, you will be required to go through on-line Institutional Review Board (IRB) training and to submit an IRB request to Davenport University. It doesn’t matter if the student is completing a work project, primary, or secondary research; this still the general process:   1. Identify a topic. 2. Identify a problem within the topic area. 3. Generate a research question. 4. Develop a process to answer the research question. 5. Create a data collection tool. 6. Collect and analyze the data. 7. Present the results. 8. Draw conclusions from the results.   These seem simple, but there are several more sub-steps within the process, and steps need to be approved by the program director. |

The Capstone Intent Form and narrative are to be submitted to the professor who will be facilitating the course. Attached is the form.

HINT 799

CAPSTONE THESIS/PROJECT TOPIC

**INTENT FORM**

**MSHIIM PROGRAM**

Students are expected to describe in writing their Capstone thesis. Please complete the form below and provide a narrative which describes your thesis. A sample narrative follows. All students must secure approval of their thesis topic during HINT 760 Methods in HIM.

Student Name: Student I.D.# \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip

Phone Numbers: (Home) (Work)

(Cell) (Fax)

E-Mail

Campus location Student Advisor

Requested Faculty Advisor (if any)

**Note:** Faculty Advisor requests are not always granted. Many factors are taken into consideration when determining Faculty Advisors.

Expected session of your Capstone class enrollment: Year \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Session \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Online section \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Office use only**

□ The above student’s Capstone Intent was reviewed and **approved**.

MSHIM Representative Signature Date

□ The above student’s Capstone Intent was reviewed and must be revised. The student should see attached comments.

MSHIM Representative Signature Date

**Capstone Intent Form Page 2**

**Please attach a three- to five-page (double-space) narrative** to the Intent Form that describes the information below. Include your name, professor’s name, and date on the attachment.

A sample outline of a narrative is attached.

1. What is a proposed title of your project? Describe the project you have in mind. What question(s) will be answered by your research? (List and state them as questions. For example, “How can physicians be reimbursed for e-visits with patients?” or “how can dashboards be used to track employee productivity?”)
2. Why are you interested in pursuing this project? How will it benefit you?
3. How will the project benefit the field, your company, and/or another firm?
4. How will you gather information? Does it involve only extensive research from published sources? Does is also involve collecting primary data through focus groups, in-depth interviews, and/or a survey? If so, which research method will be used? How many people will be surveyed? Why will this method accomplish the research objectives?

NOTE: If your research involves surveys, questionnaires, focus-groups, or other methods involving people, you will need to have your study approved by the Davenport University Institutional Review Board (IRB). For more information see: <http://www.davenport.edu/academics/institutional-review-board-irb>

1. What skills, knowledge, or classes are important for you to master in order to complete this project?
2. Does the project involve content in a paper that was written for another class? If so, submit a copy of the paper with this form.

I have read the Capstone Guidebook which describes the nature of the project.

I hereby submit this Capstone Intent Form and narrative for approval.

I understand that the Graduate staff/faculty member assigned to evaluate it has the right to reject it and request a re-write and resubmission.

I understand that my thesis paper consists of research and may be posted as such through Davenport University.

**I further understand that my project is to be original, and that plagiarism is grounds for possible dismissal from the MSHIIM program.** The Academic Integrity policy is provided in the Graduate Catalog.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Sample Intent Form Narrative)

**Capstone Intent Form Narrative**

**This should be a 3-5 page document**

[Replace sample text to complete the narrative]

**Submitted By:** (Student’s Name)

**Submitted To:** MSHIIM Capstone Committee

**Date:** (Provide date)

**Proposed Title:** Factors Affecting the Security Awareness of End-Users

**Description**

This will be a research project exploring the question: What is the significance of internal, external, and inherent factors of an organization’s end-users’ level of computer security awareness? Specific questions that will be addressed in the study are:

1. Does participation in security awareness training increase the level of security awareness of end-users?
2. Does emphasis on security by the organization’s management increase the level of security awareness of end-users?
3. Do external factors from outside the organization contribute to the end-user’s level of security awareness within the organization?
4. Do inherent factors within end-users affect their level of security awareness?

**Personal Interest**

Discuss in this section why this topic is of interest to you

**Benefits of Research**

Discuss in this section any benefits you believe may result from this research. . I.e.: The research, findings, and conclusions of this project will provide insights and guidelines that could improve the effectiveness of . . .

**Methods of Gathering Information**

Discuss the methods you will use to answer your research questions. This may include primary research (surveys, interviews, focus-groups, intervention, etc.), or secondary research involving data that has already been collected. Also note if you expect your research to be subject to IRB approval.

**Knowledge and Skills Needed**

Discuss the skills/knowledge that you expect to be important in order to be able to complete this paper. For example, the research questions above assumes knowledge of security awareness training programs, training methods, organizational structure, and external factors.

**Previous Research on this Topic**

If you have written a previous paper on this topic, list the title of the paper here and its purpose (previous course, etc.), and attach a copy of the paper with this form.

**Timeline for Thesis/Project Completion**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Course** | **Faculty Advisement** |
| Introduction to Thesis/Project | HINT 601: HINT Orientation | MS HIIM Program Director |
| Capstone Intent Form | IAAS 600: Information Security Planning | IAAS 600 Instructor in conjunction with HIM faculty member |
| Refinement of Capstone Intent  Project Proposal | HINT 760: Research Methods in HIM | MS HIIM Program Director |
| Completion of Capstone | HINT 799: Capstone | MS HIIM Program Director |