FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY

2026 CAPSTONE PROJECT HANDBOOK

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OVERVIEW

CAPSTONE OVERVIEW

The capstone project in the Francis Marion University PsyD in Health Psychology Program is a culminating experience designed to reflect the integration of scholarly inquiry with clinical relevance. Through the capstone, candidates demonstrate their ability to engage in systematic research or scholarly application that addresses a meaningful issue in professional psychology.

The capstone process involves multiple stages, including topic development, literature synthesis, methodological design, data collection or scholarly implementation, analysis, and communication of findings. Additional goals include deepening expertise in a focused content area, preparing materials for professional dissemination (e.g., conference or publication), and contributing to evidence-based practice.

This handbook provides structured guidance for navigating each phase of the capstone project from idea generation to final defense and submission.

ALIGNMENT WITH APA PROFESSION-WIDE COMPETENCIES

The Francis Marion University PsyD Capstone Project is intentionally designed to reflect the core values and competencies outlined in the APA Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology (SoA). Throughout each phase of the capstone, candidates are expected to demonstrate growth in both discipline-specific knowledge and the Profession-Wide Competencies (PWCs) essential for ethical, effective, and scholarly practice in clinical psychology. These competencies are integrated into the capstone process in both content and structure.

First, the capstone emphasizes the development of research competency. Candidates engage in the generation, evaluation, and dissemination of original scholarly work that addresses meaningful questions in clinical practice. From the literature review to the final presentation, students are challenged to uphold methodological rigor, apply datadriven inquiry, and contribute to the scientific knowledge base of psychology. Ethical and legal standards are also emphasized at every stage. Candidates are responsible for applying ethical principles in their projects, ensuring participant protection, obtaining informed consent, maintaining data confidentiality, and complying fully with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements and APA Ethics Code guidelines.

Capstone work also promotes competence in individual and cultural diversity. Candidates are expected to incorporate diverse perspectives in their research topics, sample selection, data interpretation, and review of literature. This includes thoughtful consideration of how sociocultural identities and systemic factors shape psychological experiences, outcomes, and access to services. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are cultivated through ongoing collaboration with faculty advisors, committee members, peers, and—where applicable—research participants. Candidates are expected to write and present their work clearly, respectfully, and professionally, reflecting the communication standards of the discipline. In addition, the capstone reinforces professional values and attitudes. Students are called to approach their work with integrity, accountability, and an openness to feedback, all while demonstrating persistence and flexibility throughout a rigorous, year-long scholarly process.

These competencies are woven into each capstone phase. For instance, in Phase 1, students identify clinically relevant research problems and refine them into focused questions, demonstrating competence in both research and diversity. In Phase 4, they develop ethically sound methodology and submit their IRB applications, reflecting ethical and legal standards. During Phases 6 through 8, they analyze data, draw conclusions, and share findings through both writing and presentation, thereby integrating competencies in communication, research, and professionalism. Faculty mentors and the Capstone Coordinator provide guidance throughout, ensuring that candidates receive both the challenge and the support needed to develop these APA-aligned skills.

INTEGRATION OF DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE (DSK) DOMAINS

In addition to Profession-Wide Competencies (PWCs), all doctoral students in the FMU PsyD program are expected to demonstrate mastery of **Discipline-Specific Knowledge (DSK)** domains through the capstone. These domains are foundational to health service psychology and are defined by the APA Standards of Accreditation (Standard II.A.1).

The capstone provides an opportunity for students to draw upon, integrate, and apply DSK domains in clinically relevant and scholarly ways. The table below outlines how each DSK domain may be represented within various sections of the capstone manuscript and rubric.

DSK Domain	Expected Capstone Demonstration	Rubric Area(s)
Biological aspects of behavior	Incorporate biological frameworks or findings (e.g., neuropsychology, psychophysiology, genetics) in literature review or discussion.	Literature Review; Discussion Components
Cognitive and affective aspects	Explore topics such as attention, memory, executive functioning, or emotional regulation relevant to the research question.	Literature Review; Research Design
Social aspects of behavior	Discuss social influences (e.g., peer, family, cultural systems) on behavior or mental health outcomes.	Literature Review; Discussion Components
Developmental aspects of behavior	Account for age-related or developmental considerations in sample selection, analysis, or theoretical framing.	Methodology; Results Interpretation
Cultural and individual diversity	Embed culturally responsive practices in study design, participant recruitment, and analysis; use inclusive language.	Research Design; Ethics; Written Delivery
History and systems of psychology	Frame the research within a broader historical or theoretical context; identify shifts in practice over time.	Literature Review; Justification of Topic
Research methods and data analysis	Design and execute methodologically sound quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method studies aligned with APA standards.	Research Design & Execution; Results
Psychometrics	Select validated instruments; report reliability/validity; or justify development of new measures.	Materials Section; Results; Appendix C

Students are encouraged to work with their chairs to intentionally incorporate relevant DSK domains into the literature review, research questions, and interpretation of findings. Chairs and committee members will consider evidence of DSK integration when evaluating scholarly rigor, theoretical grounding, and relevance to clinical and school psychology.

ADA ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

To ensure full accessibility and alignment with Standards III.D and IV.C, students with disabilities are encouraged to work with Francis Marion University's Office of Counseling and Testing to request reasonable accommodations related to any stage of the capstone process. This may include extended timelines, accessible formatting guidelines, or presentation support. Students are also responsible for submitting documents in formats that meet universal design standards when possible (e.g., readable text, captioned media, accessible slide design). The program is committed to supporting all students in demonstrating their scholarly work in ways that reflect both rigor and inclusivity. For assistance, students may contact the Office of Counseling and Testing or consult with the Capstone Coordinator to ensure their needs are addressed early in the process.

REGISTRATION AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

Candidates are required to enroll in **PSYC 798: Capstone** during both the **Fall and Spring semesters of their internship year.** Each term carries **1 credit hour,** reflecting continued engagement and supervised progress toward the completion of the capstone. (While students enroll in these courses during their internship year, it is preferable that students complete their capstone project by the start of their internship year).

Total required credits: 2.0 (1 credit Fall, 1 credit Spring)

GRADING AND EXPECTATIONS

At the end of each semester, candidates will receive one of the following grades:

- **S (Capstone Progress):** Indicates satisfactory engagement and completion of expected milestones. Credit is awarded but not factored into GPA.
- **U (Unsatisfactory):** Indicates failure to meet project expectations for that term. No credit is awarded. The candidate must meet with the Program Director to determine an appropriate remediation plan.
- **I (Incomplete):** May be assigned in rare situations involving documented, unforeseen circumstances beyond the candidate's control. An "Incomplete Grade Contract" must be completed by the supervising faculty member and approved by the program.

Capstone progress is monitored through structured check-ins, document drafts, committee reviews, and ultimately, the final oral defense. Completion of both semesters of PSYC 798 is required for graduation clearance.

PHASE 1: TOPIC DEVELOPMENT AND BRAINSTORMING

PURPOSE

The purpose of Phase 1 is to help you identify a capstone topic that is both personally meaningful and academically feasible. This is your opportunity to explore areas of curiosity, draw from coursework and clinical experience, and begin framing a researchable question. A strong foundation in this phase increases the likelihood of sustained motivation and successful project completion.

PRACTITIONER-SCHOLAR EMPHASIS

The FMU PsyD Capstone Project is designed to reflect the practitioner-scholar model. Your project should apply research methods to a clinically meaningful issue, with the goal of improving psychological services or informing applied practice.

You are encouraged to draw inspiration from your practicum settings, coursework, and supervision experiences. A strong project bridges evidence-based research with real-world clinical needs.

STEP 1: ENGAGE EARLY

Start exploring topic ideas as soon as possible. Let your curiosity guide you as you take classes, read assigned texts, and interact with peers and professors. Use your practicum experiences to notice clinical trends, gaps in service delivery, or common challenges that interest you. Term papers and early academic projects can often serve as the seed of a capstone topic.

- Reflect on questions that keep recurring in your mind.
- Highlight readings that resonate with you or raise new questions.
- Use assignments as opportunities to test out ideas.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY CORE INTERESTS

Begin narrowing your focus to 1–2 broad interest areas. For example, you might be drawn to trauma-informed care, multicultural counseling, neuropsychological assessment, or program evaluation. Review past work you've done and look for common threads. Keeping your focus somewhat narrow early on will allow you to develop deeper knowledge and identify research gaps.

STEP 3: COLLABORATE WITH FACULTY

Start identifying faculty members whose interests align with yours. We encourage candidates to interview faculty to find shared interests and mentorship opportunities. Browse faculty bios and publications. Reach out for informal conversations about your interests. Faculty members may suggest refinements, offer reading lists, or invite you to join ongoing projects. Candidates are encouraged to pursue topics that align with faculty expertise to ensure strong mentorship throughout the capstone process.

- Make a list of 2–3 faculty members and schedule introductory meetings.
- Prepare a short concept note (1–2 pages) describing your interests and potential directions.
- Ask about their ongoing research and candidate capstone support.

STEP 4: USE CAMPUS RESOURCES

Maximize FMU resources to support idea development. Visit the library's psychology research portal https://libguides.fmarion.edu/psychology to search ProQuest, APA PsycInfo, and PubMed for recent studies in your area. Request help from FMU librarians in refining search terms or locating dissertations. Use the Writing Center for brainstorming and organizing your thoughts. Attend workshops on research methods or IRB preparation.

- Search for 10–20 recent articles using keywords related to your interest.
- Download and read 3–5 dissertations from PsyD programs with similar structures.
- Organize citations in Zotero, EndNote, or Mendeley.

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH TRAINING

Before candidates may begin any research activities involving human subjects, they are required to complete formal ethics training. This training ensures that all candidate researchers understand and adhere to federal and institutional guidelines that protect the rights, welfare, and confidentiality of participants.

All PsyD candidates must complete the **Human Subjects Research (HSR)** training module through the **Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)** during the **Fall semester of their first year on campus.**

- This training is required prior to submitting any materials to the Francis Marion University Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- Candidates must submit documentation of completion to the Capstone Coordinator (or designated faculty advisor).
- A copy should also be retained in the candidate's personal records.

The IRB serves to review, approve, and monitor research involving human participants to ensure ethical conduct aligned with federal regulations (45 CFR 46). Completion of HSR training is a prerequisite for engaging in any capstone involving surveys, interviews, or clinical data.

To complete the training:

1. Visit https://about.citiprogram.org/ and register using your FMU email.
2. Select the "Social & Behavioral Research" learner group.
3. Complete all required modules and quizzes (estimated time: 3–4 hours).
4. Download the completion certificate for submission and record-keeping.

Failure to complete the HSR training will delay capstone planning, IRB review, and project implementation.

STEP 5: BRAINSTORM AND REFINE

Use creative tools like:

- **Mind mapping** to explore themes and subtopics.
- **Free writing** to clarify what excites or troubles you about your topic.
- **Concept charts** to identify variables or populations involved.
- **Feedback sessions** with peers or mentors to test the clarity and focus of your ideas.

You may also review "future directions" sections in journal articles to see what authors suggest as next steps for the field. This can guide your decision-making and help ensure your project adds something meaningful.

STEP 6: TYPES OF CAPSTONE PROJECTS TO CONSIDER

Capstone projects come in various forms. Examples include:

- **Program Evaluation:** Assessing the effectiveness of a therapy or outreach program.
- **Intervention Development:** Creating and piloting a therapeutic curriculum.
- **Literature Review or Meta-Synthesis:** Synthesizing existing findings to identify gaps.
- **Case Study Research:** Conducting in-depth analysis of clinical cases.
- **Instrument Development:** Designing and testing a new screening or assessment tool.

The PsyD capstone may be qualitative, quantitative, or another scholarly product like a treatment handbook or training protocol.

GUIDANCE FOR ALTERNATIVE CAPSTONE FORMATS

In addition to traditional empirical research, FMU supports a range of applied capstone formats:

- **Program or Intervention Development Projects:** *Include* a literature-informed rationale for the intervention, an outline or handbook of the program content, and a proposed evaluation plan. If possible, pilot-test or gather preliminary feedback.
- **Comprehensive Literature Review or Meta-Synthesis:** Include a methods section describing databases searched, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and how you analyzed the studies (e.g., narrative synthesis, thematic synthesis). Follow systematic or scoping review standards as appropriate.

All capstones must demonstrate scholarly rigor and alignment with APA formatting. Your chair can help you select a structure that suits your topic and aligns with best practices.

PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

To clarify expectations and help students manage their workload effectively, a visual capstone milestone calendar is provided in Appendix D. This calendar aligns major capstone deadlines—such as IRB submission, data collection, manuscript drafts, and RED Day presentation—with internship milestones. Students are strongly encouraged to consult this timeline during each semester to ensure appropriate pacing and preparation. Use the following as a general guide to structure your capstone work across the program:

- Year 2 (Spring): Complete Phase 1 (Topic Development)
- Year 2 (Summer–Fall): Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review
- Year 3 (Fall): Proposal defense and IRB approval
- Year 3 (Spring–Summer): Data collection and analysis
- Year 4 (Fall): Final writing, oral defense, and submission

These milestones may shift depending on your enrollment pace, clinical obligations, or faculty availability. Adjust as needed, but plan proactively with your chair. (It is preferable that students complete their capstone project by the start of their internship year).

FACULTY MENTORSHIP, ADVISOR SELECTION, AND COMMITTEE FORMATION

Fall Semester: PSYC 798 Capstone Seminar I
In the fall of your third/fourth year, you will enroll in **PSYC 798: Capstone Seminar I,** a required 1-credit course designed to provide structured guidance as you transition from general interest areas to a focused and feasible capstone proposal. You will meet regularly with the Capstone Coordinator and fellow candidates to refine your topic, explore methodological approaches, and begin drafting the early sections of your project.

During this semester, candidates will also participate in roundtable discussions with faculty members and advanced doctoral candidates. These sessions are intended to expose you to diverse capstone designs and offer direct feedback on your evolving ideas. Attendance is mandatory.

SELECTING A CAPSTONE ADVISOR

Your **Capstone Advisor** will serve as your primary mentor throughout the project. This faculty member will:

- Help shape your research question and design
- Guide your methodology
- Provide structured feedback and revision support
- Approve your IRB materials and final manuscript

When choosing your advisor, consider their availability, research background, and alignment with your topic. To ensure alignment with APA Standards of Accreditation (Standard IV.A), all capstone advisors must meet defined qualifications to support doctoral-level scholarship in health service psychology. The capstone advisor must be a full-time faculty member in the Francis Marion University Psychology Department and must hold a doctoral degree in psychology or a closely related field, with demonstrated expertise relevant to the student's proposed topic or methodology.

You are responsible for initiating this relationship. Share the capstone timeline, expectations, the A**dvisor Agreement Form (Appendix A),** and this handbook with potential mentors. Once the advisor agrees, submit the signed form to the Capstone Coordinator.

FORMING YOUR CAPSTONE COMMITTEE

In addition to your advisor, you will assemble a Capstone Committee composed of two individuals who provide methodological, ethical, and scholarly guidance throughout your project. One committee member must be a full-time faculty member from outside the Psychology Department at Francis Marion University. This ensures interdisciplinary breadth and diverse academic input. The second committee member will be the PsyD Research Program Coordinator, who offers programmatic oversight and continuity across all capstone phases.

Committee members must hold appropriate academic or professional qualifications relevant to the candidate's topic or methodology. They may include FMU faculty, licensed psychologists, or affiliated professionals with content specific expertise. Individuals who are unaffiliated with FMU or do not hold a terminal degree in psychology may serve as the external member only if their expertise is clearly defined and a written justification is submitted. All external appointments require prior review and approval by the Capstone Coordinator and Program Director.

Your external committee member is required to sign the **Committee Member Agreement Form (Appendix B)** after reviewing their role and responsibilities with the candidate and advisor. This ensures that the committee member understands expectations for communication, feedback, attendance at milestone meetings, and commitment to upholding the scholarly rigor of the capstone project.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE MEETINGS

You must hold at least three formal meetings with your full committee:

1. **Proposal Development Meeting** – Held during the design stage to shape your literature review and methodology.
2. **Pre-IRB Review Meeting** – Used to finalize data collection plans and address ethical concerns.
3. **Final Analysis and Writing Meeting** – Occurs during your results and discussion phases, focused on interpretation and manuscript clarity.

Candidates are expected to **lead their own meetings,** distribute key documents in advance, and identify specific areas for feedback. Virtual meetings are encouraged and may be scheduled at any point to support ongoing progress. You may schedule additional meetings as needed.

Additional guidelines for the proposal and defense meeting can be found on page 49.

CAPSTONE COMMITTEE MEMBERS – ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TIMELINES

Capstone committee members are essential to the success of the candidate's doctoral project. This outlines the expected contributions, scope of involvement, and suggested timeline for committee participation. Approval forms are provided in the appendices.

ROLES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Capstone committee members are expected to:

- Provide expert guidance, mentorship, and content-specific feedback throughout the capstone process.
- Attend at least three scheduled meetings (virtual or in-person) with the candidate and Chair to discuss the project's progress and provide formative input.
- Assist in refining the study's methodology, including data collection tools and analytic plans.
- Actively engage in reviewing and returning candidate drafts within 10–14 days to maintain project momentum.
- Support candidates in exploring opportunities for professional presentations and publications.
- Serve as advocates and supportive mentors, helping the candidate navigate challenges and maintain scholarly standards.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Committee members should contribute their knowledge and feedback throughout the following stages:

Fall (Year 3)
Participate in initial capstone development. Provide input on research questions, methodology, measures, and IRB materials.

Late Fall – Winter Break (Year 3)
Review literature review and proposed methodology in preparation for the capstone proposal defense. Offer feedback on structure, sources, and alignment with research goals.

Spring (Year 4)
Review initial data summaries or emerging qualitative themes. Provide guidance on interpretation, organization of results, and early drafting of the results and discussion chapters.

February – March (Year 4)
Review a near-final draft of the full manuscript. Offer detailed comments on content clarity, APA 7 style, coherence, and formatting.

March (Year 4)
Review the finalized manuscript prior to submission. Confirm that all components meet graduate program standards.

April (Year 4)
Review the candidate's poster, presentation slides, and abstract for FMU RED Day. Provide final suggestions and coaching for presentation quality and professionalism. Hold candidate's final defense meeting in April prior to their graduation. This would be held within the three weeks after RED and before reading day prior to graduation.

EXPANDED EXAMPLES AND TEMPLATES

Candidates are strongly encouraged to review past FMU PsyD capstone projects housed in the university repository. These serve as models for formatting, structure, tone, and integration of scholarly sources.
The following templates and samples are available on the FMU Capstone Resources Page (or by request from your chair):

- APA 7 Title Page Template
- Sample Table of Contents
- Formatted example of a literature review chapter
- APA checklist for headings, in-text citations, tables, and figures
- FMU Repository Examples

Use these tools to ensure your final manuscript meets all formatting and scholarly expectations. Your chair or the Writing Center can also help interpret or customize these resources.

END-OF-PHASE 1 CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

☐ Identified 1–2 broad areas of interest.
☐ Met with at least one faculty member for input.
☐ Located and reviewed 5–10 key articles or prior dissertations.
☐ Developed a rough concept note summarizing your interests.
☐ Explored FMU library and writing resources.
☐ Created a short list of potential capstone formats.

CAPSTONE ADVISOR

☐ Reviewed and approved candidate's 1–2 broad topic areas
☐ Met with candidate to discuss alignment with clinical and scholarly priorities
☐ Provided initial feedback on concept note and research feasibility
☐ Recommended relevant literature, databases, and capstone formats
☐ Discussed IRB training requirements and timelines
☐ Signed and submitted the Capstone Chair Agreement Form

CAPSTONE COMMITTEE MEMBER

☐ Reviewed candidate's initial topic concept and offered feedback
☐ Discussed expectations and communication preferences with chair and candidate
☐ Reviewed the Capstone Handbook and agreement responsibilities
☐ Confirmed availability for three milestone meetings
☐ Signed and submitted the Committee Member Agreement

CAPSTONE PROJECT BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to explore, refine, and prioritize your dissertation topic ideas. Complete it before your initial meeting with your chair.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY CLINICAL INTERESTS

What clinical populations, diagnoses, settings, or interventions do you feel most passionate about?

Clinical Populations	Diagnoses/Conditions	Settings	Interventions/Models
e.g., children, veterans, LGBTQ+ youth	e.g., trauma, ADHD, depression	e.g., schools, VA, prisons	e.g., CBT, DBT, mindfulness

STEP 2: REFLECT ON LIVED AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

What real-world experiences (practicum, work, lived experience) have shaped your interests?

_____

_____

_____

How might these influence a research question?

STEP 3: DRAFT POSSIBLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Use these sentence starters to begin forming your capstone question(s):

- What is the impact of _____ on _____ ?
- What is the impact of _____ experience _____ ?
- What are clinicians' perceptions of _____?
- Does _____ improve _____ ?

List 3-5 potential research questions or project ideas below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STEP 4: EVALUATE FEASIBILITY AND FIT

Question/Idea	Personal Interest (1–5)	Clinical Relevance (1–5)	Feasibility (1–5)	Notes

STEP 5: ALIGN WITH CAPSTONE FORMAT

Check which formats might fit each idea:

☐ Quantitative study (e.g., survey, archival data)

☐ Qualitative study (e.g., interviews, thematic analysis)

☐ Program development or evaluation

☐ Comprehensive literature review

☐ Mixed methods

STEP 6: NEXT STEPS

1. Schedule a topic meeting with your chair
2. Begin a preliminary literature search in the FMU Library database
3. Talk with field supervisors or site mentors about feasibility or access

PHASE 2: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PURPOSE

The goal of Phase 2 is to help you build a strong academic foundation by creating an annotated bibliography of key sources related to your capstone topic. This task helps you gain deeper familiarity with existing research, critically evaluate evidence, and prepare for the literature review.

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURE

An annotated bibliography is more than a reading list. Each entry includes:

1. A full APA citation.
2. A summary of the article's goals, methods, and findings.
3. A critical evaluation of its strengths and limitations.
4. A note about its relevance to your own capstone project.

This helps you learn to analyze literature, not just collect it.

STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR SOURCES WISELY

Aim to include 15–20 sources that are:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles (especially empirical studies).
- Seminal theoretical works.
- Recent studies from the last 5–7 years.
- Systematic reviews or meta-analyses.
- Tools or protocols relevant to your design (e.g., validated surveys).

Avoid relying too heavily on textbooks or websites unless they are from authoritative bodies like the APA.

STEP 3: USE LIBRARY TOOLS AND REFERENCE MANAGERS

- Use FMU's Library Psychology Database Portal [https://libguides.fmarion.edu/psychology] to search APA PsycInfo, PubMed, ERIC, etc.
- Try citation tools like Zotero or Mendeley to organize and export references.
- Ask FMU librarians for help refining searches or learning Boolean operators.

STEP 4: WRITE YOUR ANNOTATIONS

Each annotation should:

- Begin with the citation (APA 7 format).
- Summarize the key content of the article.
- Analyze the methods, validity, and conclusions.
- Reflect on how the source informs your thinking.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY EXAMPLES (APA 7TH EDITION)

Use these examples to better understand how to craft effective annotations in APA 7th edition format. These demonstrate the difference between a weak and a strong entry.

EXAMPLE 1: WEAK ANNOTATION

Smith, J. A. (2020). Understanding trauma in adolescents. Journal of Adolescent Psychology, 15(2), 100–110. https://doi.org/10.1234/jap.2020.01502

This article is about trauma in teens and talks about how it affects their brains. The author says trauma is bad and can make teens act out. It has some facts and examples about teenagers who have trauma. It also says therapy can help.

WHY THIS IS A WEAK EXAMPLE:

- Too vague: Doesn't summarize the study's design, methodology, or findings.
- Lacks evaluation: Doesn't assess the quality, credibility, or relevance of the source.
- Informal tone: Uses casual language inappropriate for academic writing.
- No connection to the candidate's research question or capstone topic.

EXAMPLE 2: STRONG ANNOTATION

Smith, J. A. (2020). Understanding trauma in adolescents. Journal of Adolescent Psychology, 15(2), 100–110. https://doi.org/10.1234/jap.2020.01502

In this peer-reviewed article, Smith (2020) explores the neurological and behavioral impacts of trauma on adolescents using a mixed-methods design. The study included surveys from 150 high school students and follow-up interviews with a smaller qualitative subsample. Results indicated a statistically significant correlation between trauma exposure and executive functioning deficits, particularly in emotional regulation. The article is relevant to my capstone because it provides empirical evidence that supports my hypothesis about the cognitive effects of trauma in school-age youth. Smith's synthesis of prior literature and use of validated measures strengthen the article's credibility.

WHY THIS IS A STRONG EXAMPLE:

- Includes a clear summary of the article's purose, methods, and findings.
- Evaluates the quality and credibility of the source.
- Explicitly connects the article to the candidate's research focus.

YOUR TURN.

Is this a strong or weak example?

Example:

Miller, D. L., & Garcia, P. R. (2021). Telepsychology interventions during COVID-19: Lessons learned from frontline providers. Clinical Psychology Review, 88, 102075. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2021.102075

This qualitative study explored clinician perspectives on delivering therapy via telepsychology. Using thematic analysis, the authors identified concerns about rapport, technical barriers, and cultural responsiveness. The study informs my capstone project on access to mental health care in rural communities.

This is a WEAK example. To align with APA 7th edition expectations for an exemplary annotation, the entry could be strengthened by including additional details such as the sample size and setting—for instance, how many clinicians were interviewed and in what type of clinical environment they worked. A brief critical evaluation of the study's quality would also enhance the annotation, such as noting whether the design was rigorous or identifying any limitations that may affect the interpretation of the findings. Finally, a more detailed explanation of how this article will specifically inform the candidate's literature review, methodology, or analytic plan would clarify its relevance and demonstrate a deeper level of scholarly engagement.

Here is the updated example with the questions addressed.

Example:

Miller, D. L., & Garcia, P. R. (2021). Telepsychology interventions during COVID-19: Lessons learned from frontline providers. Clinical Psychology Review, 88, 102075. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2021.102075

This qualitative study explored clinician perspectives on delivering therapy via telepsychology during the early COVID-19 pandemic. Using thematic analysis of interviews with 28 licensed psychologists in rural and urban settings, the authors identified concerns related to rapport-building, technical limitations, and cultural responsiveness. The article provides credible, practice-based insights and was published in a high-impact, peer-reviewed journal. It informs my capstone project by highlighting potential barriers to virtual care delivery in underserved rural regions and may help frame interview questions for my qualitative component.

STEP 5: THEMATIC ORGANIZATION

Once your annotations are drafted, begin grouping them into major themes. This will help you later when you write your literature review.

Example themes might include:

- Access to care in rural populations
- Therapist-client rapport in telehealth
- Barriers to multicultural counseling access
- Adolescent trauma interventions

Creating themes now will make Phase 3 smoother and more coherent.

END-OF-PHASE 2 CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

- ☐ Selected 15–20 peer-reviewed sources.
- ☐ Wrote annotations including summary, critique, and relevance.
- ☐ Formatted citations in APA 7th edition style.
- ☐ Grouped sources into preliminary themes.
- ☐ Used Zotero, EndNote, or another reference manager.
- ☐ Met with faculty or peers to review sample annotations.

ADVISOR

- ☐ Reviewed the candidate's list of 15–20 annotated sources
- ☐ Provided formative feedback on summary, critique, and relevance sections
- ☐ Confirmed adherence to APA 7 formatting for citations
- ☐ Discussed emerging themes and literature gaps with the candidate
- ☐ Ensured that reference management tools (e.g., Zotero) are in use
- ☐ Scheduled a check-in meeting to guide transition into literature review phase
- ☐ Confirmed that all components from the References rubric were addressed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- ☐ Reviewed 2–3 sample annotations from the candidate (if provided)
- ☐ Offered feedback on thematic alignment and scholarly tone
- ☐ Provided recommendations for additional sources or perspectives
- ☐ Confirmed readiness to support Phase 3 review of literature synthesis
- ☐ Confirmed that all components from the References rubric were addressed.

PHASE 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

PURPOSE

The purpose of the literature review is to synthesize existing research to establish the academic and clinical foundation for your study. This chapter demonstrates your ability to understand, organize, and critique scholarly work in your field. It shows readers what is already known about your topic, what remains uncertain, and where your capstone project fits in.

STEP 1: DEFINE THE SCOPE

Start by identifying the boundaries of your review. What key concepts, populations, interventions, or outcomes will you focus on? Clearly outline what your review will and will not cover. This will help maintain focus and avoid drifting into unrelated topics.

STEP 2: ORGANIZE THEMATICALLY

Organize your literature review by themes, not by individual article summaries. For example, you might create sections such as:

- Theoretical frameworks related to your topic
- Risk or protective factors for the population
- Existing interventions and their outcomes
- Gaps or controversies in the research

Each section should include multiple sources that you synthesize together. Show how studies compare, contrast, or build upon each other.

STEP 3: SYNTHESIZE, DON'T SUMMARIZE

Move beyond summarizing individual articles. Instead, analyze how the research fits together:

- Where do researchers agree or disagree?
- What methods are commonly used?
- What populations are underrepresented?
- What key questions remain unanswered?

Use transitional phrases and synthesis language:

- "Several studies suggest..."
- "In contrast to X, Y found..."
- "This trend is consistent with..."

STEP 4: HIGHLIGHT GAPS AND JUSTIFY YOUR STUDY

As you write, make note of what is missing from the literature. This might be:

- A lack of research in a specific population
- Outdated or inconclusive findings
- The need to test a new method or theory

You will use these gaps to justify why your study is needed.

STEP 5: USE A LOGICAL STRUCTURE

A typical literature review format includes:

1. **Introduction:** Define your topic and goals of the review.
2. **Thematic Body Sections:** Organize into subsections by theme.
3. **Critical Analysis:** Integrate strengths, weaknesses, and conflicts.
4. **Summary and Transition:** Conclude by summarizing what is known and stating why your study is needed.

STEP 6: CITATION AND FORMATTING

Follow APA 7th edition style for all in-text citations and the reference list. Be consistent with formatting headings, quotes, and statistics. Use your annotated bibliography as a starting point but rewrite each source's contribution to fit the flow of your review.

Tip: Use a matrix or spreadsheet to track how each source supports specific themes or research questions. (See "Sample Matrix for Theme Tracking" on page 23).

END-OF-PHASE 3 CHECKLISTS

CANDIDATE

- ☐ I have clearly defined the scope and boundaries of my review, including populations, key concepts, and outcomes.
- ☐ I created a thematic outline or concept map to guide my review structure.
- ☐ I synthesized between 20 and 40 scholarly, peer-reviewed sources.
- ☐ I identified meaningful gaps or limitations in the literature that justify my study.
- ☐ I followed APA 7 formatting for all references and in-text citations.
- ☐ I drafted and revised the literature review section with feedback from my chair, writing center, or peer.

ADVISOR

- ☐ Reviewed a full draft of the literature review with 20–40 peer-reviewed sources
- ☐ Verified that sources are current, relevant, and thematically organized
- ☐ Confirmed synthesis rather than summary across sections
- ☐ Provided written and/or verbal feedback on:
  - ☐ The clarity and relevance of the scope and research question
  - ☐ Integration of empirical evidence, theories, and scholarly frameworks
  - ☐ Identification of literature gaps justifying the study
- ☐ Checked APA 7 formatting for references, headings, and citations
- ☐ Discussed the logical structure (intro, thematic sections, critical analysis, conclusion)
- ☐ Ensured the writing is scholarly, coherent, and free of excessive quotation
- ☐ Scheduled time for proposal preparation and next phase planning
- ☐ Confirmed that all components from the Literature Review Rubric were addressed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- ☐ Reviewed the thematic outline or draft version of the literature review
- ☐ Provided formative feedback on:
  - ☐ Strength of literature integration and synthesis.
  - ☐ The relevance of selected sources to the proposed study.
  - ☐ Use of theoretical models or frameworks.
- ☐ Verified that major sections address key content areas and gaps.
- ☐ Reviewed the tone, structure, and APA formatting of the submitted draft.
- ☐ Recommended additional sources or conceptual refinements if needed.
- ☐ Helped ensure that the review positions the candidate's project within the broader literature.
- ☐ Confirmed that all components from the Literature Review Rubric were addressed.

SAMPLE MATRIX FOR THEME TRACKING

Citation (APA 7)	Study Design	Sample/Setting	Key Findings	Themes Addressed	Relevance to Capstone
Smith (2020)	Mixed Methods	150 adolescents in high schools	Trauma linked to executive function deficits	Cognitive effects of trauma, Intervention need	Supports hypothesis on cognitive outcomes of trauma
Johnson & Lee (2019)	Qualitative (Interviews)	12 school counselors	Counselors report limited training in trauma care	Professional training, Systemic barriers	Highlights gap in counselor preparedness
Martinez et al. (2021)	Quantitative (Survey)	300 parents across three counties	Parental stress correlated with student behavior issues	Family context, Behavioral outcomes	Emphasizes need for family-inclusive practices

PHASE 4: METHODOLOGY DESIGN

PURPOSE

The methodology chapter is the blueprint of your study. It explains how you will answer your research question, step by step, and must be clear enough that another researcher could replicate your study. At this stage, your goal is to articulate and justify your research design, participants, data collection methods, and analysis procedures. Your decisions should align logically with your literature review and study objectives.

STEP 1: SELECT A RESEARCH DESIGN

The first step is to identify the overall approach that best fits your question. If your question asks **"how much," "how often," or "what is the relationship between variables,"** a **quantitative** design is appropriate. If your question seeks to understand **experiences, meaning, or process,** a **qualitative** design is more fitting. If you want both numerical trends and in-depth understanding, a **mixed-methods** approach may be ideal.

You might also consider other common formats used in PsyD capstones:

- **Case Study:** An in-depth examination of one client, group, or organization.
- **Program Evaluation:** Assessing the effectiveness or implementation of a program.
- **Instrument Development:** Creating or validating a new psychological measure.
- **Secondary Data Analysis:** Using existing datasets to answer new questions.

Make sure your chosen design directly matches your research question and the type of data you will collect. For all empirical designs, it is important to determine whether your sample size is sufficient to answer your research question with confidence.

For quantitative studies, you should conduct an a priori power analysis to estimate the minimum number of participants required to detect a meaningful effect size with appropriate statistical power (typically 0.80). Power analyses can be conducted using tools such as G*Power. Justify the expected effect size, alpha level (e.g., 0.05), and power in your methodology chapter. This ensures your study is not underpowered, which could lead to misleading or inconclusive findings.

For qualitative studies, you should describe your plan for data adequacy based on the concept of saturation, this refers to the point at which no new information or themes emerge from your data. While there is no fixed number for qualitative sample sizes, you should describe your reasoning for the anticipated number of participants and how you will determine when saturation has been reached.

If you are unsure how to calculate power or evaluate saturation, consult with your chair or a faculty methodologist.

Note: Candidates are responsible for ensuring their methodological choices meet accepted standards for rigor, reliability, and ethical conduct. When in doubt, use current APA manuals, the JARS (Journal Article Reporting Standards) guidelines, and faculty resources to strengthen your design and analysis.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR PARTICIPANTS OR DATA SOURCE

Clearly describe who or what you will study. Specify your **population** (e.g., adolescents with anxiety, school psychologists), **sample size,** and **recruitment method** (e.g., flyers, referrals, emails). Include any **inclusion or exclusion criteria**—for example, you may only include adults aged 18 and older who speak English and have received therapy in the past year.

If you are conducting a **case study** or working with **archival data,** describe the dataset, setting, or case selection strategy. Always clarify how your sample will provide enough evidence to address your research question.
Tip: Begin drafting your participant section early so you can adapt it for your IRB application.

STEP 3: DEFINE YOUR DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Describe in detail what information you will collect and how. This may include:

- **Quantitative tools** like standardized questionnaires (e.g., GAD-7, Beck Depression Inventory).
- **Qualitative methods** like semi-structured interviews, focus groups, or document analysis.
- **Observation or behavioral coding** tools.
- **Archival records** from clinics, schools, or publicly available databases.

Include how long data collection will take, where it will happen, and whether you will pilot-test your instruments. If using published measures, cite them appropriately and summarize their reliability and validity. If creating your own tools, describe how you will develop and test them.

FMU maintains a list of commonly used psychological instruments with documented reliability and validity. Please refer to the FMU Psychology Department Psychological Assessment Library or consult with your chair for instrument selection and usage guidelines.

Students planning to collect data at external clinical sites, including practica or internship settings, must coordinate with both Francis Marion University's IRB and the host site's research oversight processes. If the external site maintains its own IRB, students must determine whether a formal reliance agreement is necessary. In such cases, FMU IRB may either cede or retain review responsibility, depending on the scope and sensitivity of the study. Additionally, students must obtain a signed data use agreement or site permission letter from the organization before data collection begins. This documentation must be submitted with the FMU IRB application. Students are strongly encouraged to initiate discussions with site supervisors and the Capstone Coordinator early in project planning to avoid delays and ensure compliance with all ethical and institutional requirements.

STEP 4: ADDRESS ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Your study must comply with ethical standards for research involving human participants. Before collecting any data, you must receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Francis Marion University.

In your methodology, describe:

- How you will obtain informed consent.
- How you will maintain confidentiality and securely store data.
- What risks (if any) are involved and how you will minimize them.
- Whether participants may withdraw and what happens if they do.

All research involving human subjects requires prior approval through the FMU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Submit your application through the FMU IRB Portal:
https://www.fmarion.edu/provost/institutionalreviewboard/

Questions can be directed to the IRB Office at Megan Haggard, mhaggard@fmarion.edu, or (843) 661-4685.

If your study involves a vulnerable population (e.g., minors, individuals with mental illness), or collects sensitive information, be especially thorough in describing protections.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

To align with Domain C of the APA Standards of Accreditation (SoA) and promote equitable and socially responsible research, all PsyD candidates are expected to intentionally incorporate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) considerations into the design and execution of their capstone projects. Inclusive research design begins with the formulation of research questions that acknowledge the role of individual and cultural diversity in psychological phenomena. Candidates should work to avoid sampling bias by considering how to include underrepresented populations and ensure that their recruitment and methodology are accessible and respectful across diverse groups. Language used in surveys, interviews, and written reports must be non-stigmatizing, culturally sensitive, and inclusive of varied identities and experiences. Additionally, students are encouraged to reflect on how intersecting variables such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, ability, and cultural background may influence their topic and findings. This commitment should also extend to the literature review, where diverse perspectives and voices must be represented. Resources for supporting culturally responsive design are available through the FMU Library and the APA Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists (2017). Your Capstone Chair or the Capstone Coordinator can assist with identifying tools, language guidance, or frameworks that align with best practices in inclusive scholarship.

STEP 5: PLAN FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Your data analysis plan should flow logically from your research design.

For **quantitative studies,** specify:

- Which statistical tests you will use (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, regression).
- What software you'll use (e.g., SPSS, R, Excel).
- Whether you'll report effect sizes, confidence intervals, and significance levels.
- Justify your sample size using a power analysis. Describe the expected effect size, alpha level, and power level used to estimate the required sample. Provide the rationale and cite appropriate sources or software tools.

For **qualitative studies,** explain:

- What analytic method you'll use (e.g., thematic analysis, grounded theory).
- How you will code and organize the data (e.g., using NVivo, Dedoose, or Excel).
- How you will ensure trustworthiness (e.g., audit trails, peer checking, thick description).
- Describe how you determined your target sample size, referencing saturation as your guiding principle for adequacy.

For **mixed-methods projects,** describe how you'll integrate both strands. Will the data be collected concurrently or sequentially? How will you compare or combine the findings?

If your design or analytic approach involves specialized or advanced methods (i.e. structural equation modeling, phenomenological analysis, or implementation science frameworks), consult with a faculty methodologist or appropriate APA resource. Candidates are strongly encouraged to use additional APA-aligned methodology texts or seek statistical consultation to ensure proper design, data integrity, and interpretability. You are encouraged to use APA's Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS), the APA Methodology Handbooks, or other professional references for accurate design and reporting.

Remember to justify all analytic choices and link them to your research question and data type.

SELECTING THE RIGHT STATISTICAL TEST: DECISION FLOWCHART

Choosing the appropriate statistical test depends on your research question, the type of data you've collected, and the assumptions underlying different tests. Use the flowcharts at the end of this handbook as a starting guide or these websites that follow. Consult your chair or a methodologist for confirmation.

- https://statsflowchart.co.uk/
- https://stat-tree.com/
- https://statistics.laerd.com/

STEP 6: DRAFT THE METHODOLOGY CHAPTER

Once you've selected your design, participants, procedures, and analysis plan, you're ready to begin writing. Structure your methodology chapter with clear subheadings and keep it organized, concise, and detailed. Follow APA 7 style throughout. Use the future tense when describing procedures you have not yet conducted.

Your chapter will typically include:

1. **Research Design**
2. **Participants**
3. **Instruments or Measures**
4. **Procedures**
5. **Ethical Considerations**
6. **Data Analysis Plan**

Before finalizing, review your work with your chair or methodologist to ensure your plan is feasible, ethical, and logically aligned.

IRB SUBMISSION PROCESS

All PsyD candidates conducting research with human subjects are required to submit their capstone proposals to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. This ensures that participants' rights, privacy, and safety are protected according to federal research guidelines.

Capstone proposals are typically submitted during the **Fall semester of the internship year (Year 3 or 4),** following proposal approval by your advisor and committee.

FMU uses the eIRB system for IRB submissions.

OVERVIEW OF THE IRB PROCESS:

- During Fall Professional Issues Practicum (PSYC 600A), a workshop will walk you through the IRB submission process, including eIRB navigation, application components, and consent procedures.
- Candidates must **complete Human Subjects Research (HSR) training via CITI** before IRB submission (typically completed during Fall of Year 3). You cannot submit your project without documentation of this training.

TIMELINE AND MILESTONES:

- The **target date** for IRB submission is **mid-to-late October** of the Fall semester.
- You must receive **final approval from your advisor, committee, and Capstone Coordinator** before submitting to the IRB. Plan early and schedule internal reviews by late September to stay on track.

- Candidates who miss the internal October deadline must submit a written progress plan and may face delays in beginning data collection.

DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF REVIEW:

Most PsyD candidate projects fall under **Exempt or Expedited** review categories. You will work with your advisor and Capstone Coordinator to determine the appropriate level based on:

- Participant risk level
- Use of identifying data
- Intervention types
- Consent or waiver needs

For help determining your level of review, consult the FMU IRB representative or a faculty member trained in research compliance. Guidance is also available on the eIRB site, including a **"Waiver of Written Consent"** form if you do not plan to collect signatures.

SUBMITTING THE IRB:

1. Navigate to the IRB website.
2. Complete all online forms and upload your IRB proposal, consent documents (if needed), recruitment materials, and any measures.
3. Your **advisor will review and approve your submission online.**
4. Once approved, your application is routed to the IRB office for review. If edits are needed, you'll be contacted.
5. After receiving **IRB approval,** you may begin participant contact and data collection.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- No data may be collected until full IRB approval is received.
- Any substantial changes to your methodology, measures, or participant pool must be submitted as an **IRB amendment.**
- Store your IRB approval letter and correspondence as part of your final capstone submission.

For questions about the IRB process, contact:

Dr. Megan Haggard
FMU IRB Coordinator
mhaggard@fmarion.edu | (843) 661-4685

END-OF-PHASE 4 CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

- ☐ I have selected a clear and appropriate research design (quantitative, qualitative, mixed, etc.).
- ☐ I have described my participant population, recruitment methods, and inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- ☐ I have clearly outlined my data collection tools and procedures.
- ☐ I have addressed ethical issues and prepared my IRB materials.
- ☐ I have written a full draft of my methodology chapter using APA 7 format.
- ☐ I have reviewed and revised this chapter based on faculty feedback.

ADVISOR

- ☐ Reviewed and approved the full methodology chapter draft
- ☐ Confirmed that the research design (quantitative, qualitative, mixed, or applied) is aligned with the research question
- ☐ Reviewed and confirmed adequacy of:
    - ☐ Participant selection criteria and recruitment plan
    - ☐ Instruments/measures (with reliability/validity evidence)
    - ☐ Data collection procedures and site feasibility
        - ☐ Verified ethical procedures are clearly described (informed consent, confidentiality, withdrawal rights)
        - ☐ Confirmed cultural responsiveness and JEDI considerations are integrated into design and language
        - ☐ Reviewed the data analysis plan for rigor, transparency, and APA alignment:
- ☐ Quantitative: Confirmed use of appropriate statistical tests, effect size justification, and power analysis
- ☐ Qualitative: Confirmed approach to saturation, coding structure, and trustworthiness
    - ☐ Ensured all IRB documentation is drafted and approved internally prior to submission
    - ☐ Provided written feedback and confirmed readiness for IRB submission
    - ☐ Ensured APA 7 formatting is used throughout
    - ☐ Confirmed all methodology elements meet APA JARS standards for transparency and replicability
- ☐ Confirmed that all components from the Research Design & Execution rubric were addressed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- ☐ Reviewed the methodology chapter draft and offered formative feedback
- ☐ Verified alignment between the research question and proposed design
- ☐ Evaluated ethical considerations, especially for studies with vulnerable populations
- ☐ Provided feedback on participant selection and data collection procedures
- ☐ Assessed data analysis plan for clarity, methodological appropriateness, and coherence with study design
- ☐ Checked for culturally responsive language and inclusive recruitment strategies
- ☐ Reviewed IRB preparation materials (proposal narrative, consent, and measures)
- ☐ Supported candidate in preparing for IRB submission and next phase milestones
- ☐ Confirmed that all components from the Research Design & Execution rubric were addressed.

EXAMPLE IRB

This sample IRB summary is provided to guide PsyD candidates in understanding the format and detail required when preparing an IRB application. All identifying information, dates, and content are fictionalized and for instructional purposes only.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Title of Project: An Examination of the School-Based Professional's Knowledge of Behavioral Phenotypes Associated with Genetic Conditions
Proposed Type of Project: Department / Outside of University
Proposed Start Date: 9/30/2024
Proposed End Date: 4/30/2025
Requested Review: Exempted Review

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Name: Crystal Hill-Chapman
Title: Professor
Department/School: Psychology
Office: Carter Center 238
Email: CHILLCHAPMAN@FMARION.EDU
Phone: (843) 661-1721
CITI Training: Yes

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Name: Stephanie Williams
Title: Assistant Professor
Department/School: Francis Marion University, Psychology
Email: stephanie.willams@fmarion.edu
CITI Training: Yes

PART II: BASIC PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Will you have in-person contact with participants? No
Participant Identity: Participant responses cannot be identified.
Information is collected in such a way that participants…Risks are the same as encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examination or tests.
Estimated Number of Participants: 300
Population: Normal Adult Community Residents
Recruitment Procedures: To recruit subjects, we will send an email detailing the study's purpose, participation requirements, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. The first 100 participants will receive $10 Amazon gift cards for completing the survey, and all participants will be entered in a raffle to win one of ten $50 Amazon gift cards.
If you plan to exclude a group from your study, please provide a justification for this/these group(s) exclusion from the study: N/A
Location of Study: Online Questionnaire

PART III: PROJECT PROPOSAL – PURPOSE SUMMARY

Integrating genetic knowledge into educational frameworks is becoming an essential facet of personalized education, reflecting the broader trend toward individualized medicine where interventions are based on unique genetic profiles (Mathur & Sutton, 2017). This strategic approach is particularly pertinent for students with genetic conditions, who may require tailored educational plans. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) serve as the blueprint for this customization, aiming to ensure students with genetic conditions receive the requisite support for their academic and social development (Hodapp & Fidler, 1999; Thompson et al., 2022; Wilczynski et al., 2007).

The impact of genetic conditions on learning and behavior necessitates educational strategies that are informed by a comprehensive understanding of these conditions. Educational genetics, a burgeoning field, acknowledges that understanding a student's genetic condition can lead to more effective and precise educational interventions (Ding et al., 2009; Panofsky, 2015; Plomin & Walker, 2003; Thompson et al., 2022; Walker & Plomin, 2005). For instance, IEPs' supporting strategies are unique to a student's needs with a particular genetic condition. They are essential for providing something markedly different from what students with other conditions might need (Ball et al., 2018).

Enhancing the genetic literacy of school staff has been shown to improve IEP development and implementation significantly (Barker, 2021; Beck & DeSutter, 2020). When genetic counselors collaborate with school faculty, educators can provide insightful support for students with genetic conditions (Barker, 2021).

This study aims to examine the effects of increased genetic awareness among school staff on IEP development and execution, the nature of collaboration between genetic counselors and educational staff, the perceptions of special educators on the importance of genetic knowledge, the barriers encountered in integrating genetic disorder education into professional training, and the potential contributions of genetic counselors to the professional development of school faculty. These questions are intended to unpack the potential and actualized benefits of merging genetic knowledge with educational practice, shedding light on the methodologies that underpin the effective incorporation of genetic insights into IEPs. The study also seeks to illuminate the viewpoints of educational professionals on the relevance of genetics to their professional development and teaching methods, thereby addressing a critical aspect of educational inclusivity and effectiveness for students with genetic conditions (King et al., 2018b).

Informed Consent: Are you seeking a waiver of any elements of informed consent? No
Who will obtain the participant's consent? Principal Investigator
Will participants receive course/academic credits for participation? No
Will participants receive monetary remuneration? No
Will participants receive incentive gifts (prizes, awards, etc)? Yes

> **Please explain the incentive gifts the participant will receive:** The first 100 participants will receive a $10 Amazon gift card within 30 days of completing the questionnaire. After the study closes, ALL participants will be entered into a drawing for one of ten $50 Amazon gift cards.

Will there be any other type of remuneration? No
Nature of Research Please indicate the nature of your research: Collection of descriptive statistics; Survey

PROCEDURES SUMMARY

The study described is a cross-sectional, survey-based research project focused on collecting data from school-based professionals involved in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for candidates with genetic conditions. This single-phase study does not include follow-up data collection or multiple stages, simplifying the IRB approval process as it does not require separate approvals for subsequent phases. The primary data collection tool is an online, self-administered investigator created questionnaire that participants will complete once, requiring approximately 15 minutes. The questionnaire includes a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions designed to gather demographic information, assess professional experiences, and explore attitudes and practices concerning the integration of genetic knowledge into IEPs. Ethical considerations and data security are paramount, with the study posing minimal risk to participants. To protect confidentiality and data security, the survey does not collect any personally identifying information and is administered through a platform compliant with HIPAA and FERPA standards.

Informed consent is obtained electronically, ensuring participants are fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Data analysis will employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, using descriptive statistics and inferential tests for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses. Strict protocols are in place for the anonymization and secure storage of data, with access restricted to the research team, ensuring robust data collection, analysis, and protection of participant rights and data integrity.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA SECURITY

Participant confidentiality will be ensured through a comprehensive set of measures that include physical safeguards, data storage protocols, access limitations, and meticulous planning for data destruction. All data collected via the online questionnaire will be stored on secure, password-protected servers equipped with encryption technologies to protect the data both during storage and transmission. Access to this sensitive data will be strictly limited to authorized research team members who will undergo specific training in data confidentiality and ethical handling of sensitive information. These team members will adhere to strict access protocols, with all access instances being logged and monitored to prevent unauthorized access.

To further enhance confidentiality, all personal identifiers, such as contact information collected for raffle participation, will be stored separately from the survey responses and will not be linked to the questionnaire data, ensuring that responses remain anonymous. Regarding data destruction, the timeline and methods for securely destroying the data will be dictated by Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and will comply with legal and ethical standards. Generally, research data will be retained for a post-study three-year-period to facilitate analysis and respond to any queries regarding the findings. Upon reaching the end of this period, the data will be destroyed securely in a manner that prevents any possibility of recovery or unauthorized use, thereby maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of participant information throughout the research process.

PART IV: CHECKLIST OF DOCUMENTS PROVIDED

- Recruitment Email
- Survey Instrument (PDF)
- CITI Certificates (All Investigators)
- Signed Agreement and Assurance

PHASE 5: DATA COLLECTION

PURPOSE

The data collection phase is when your capstone project becomes reality. This is the stage where you gather the evidence needed to answer your research question—through surveys, interviews, archival data, or another method. Your goal is to collect data systematically, ethically, and consistently, following the approved procedures in your IRB application.

STEP 1: CONFIRM IRB APPROVAL

Before collecting any data, you must have **formal approval from the Francis Marion University Institutional Review Board (IRB).** Your data collection procedures must exactly match those described in your IRB application. If any part of your plan changes (e.g., a new recruitment method or revised survey), you must submit a modification request and receive approval before continuing.

All research involving human subjects requires prior approval through the FMU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Submit your application through the FMU IRB Portal:

https://www.fmarion.edu/provost/institutionalreviewboard/

Questions can be directed to the IRB Office at Megan Haggard, mhaggard@fmarion.edu, or (843) 661-4685.

Keep a copy of your IRB approval letter and consent documents in a secure location for your final submission.

STEP 2: UNDERSTAND THE TYPES OF DATA COLLECTION

Select the data collection method that best aligns with your research design and question. Below are the most common options for PsyD capstone projects:

- **Surveys and Questionnaires**
  These tools are commonly used in quantitative studies to collect standardized data on variables such as symptoms, attitudes, or behaviors. Surveys may be delivered online or on paper, and often include validated instruments like the PHQ-9, GAD-7, or Beck inventories. If you create your own items, clearly describe how you developed and tested them for clarity and relevance.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews**
  Interviews are a staple of qualitative research and are used to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, or stories. You'll use an interview guide with open-ended questions and follow-up prompts. Interviews should be recorded (with consent), transcribed, and stored securely. This method requires strong listening skills, consistency, and attention to confidentiality.
- **Focus Groups**
  A focus group gathers multiple participants for a guided discussion. This format can reveal group norms or collective perspectives. It's useful in community psychology, program evaluation, or needs assessments. You'll need a skilled facilitator and a plan for managing group dynamics and participant privacy.
- **Behavioral Observations**
  Observational data is collected by directly watching and recording specific behaviors in real time (e.g., classroom settings, therapy sessions). You must use a structured observation tool and ensure that your presence does not interfere with natural behavior. Observers should be trained to improve accuracy and reduce bias.

- **Archival Data**
  Archival data involves analyzing existing records such as clinic notes, academic records, intake forms, or session logs. This method avoids new data collection but still requires:
  - IRB approval—even for de-identified records
  - A clear description of how the original data was collected
  - Procedures for removing personal identifiers and protecting confidentiality
  - A justification for how the archival data aligns with your research question

  Example:

  A candidate examining five years of intake paperwork from a counseling center to explore trends in presenting problems among college students.

- **Secondary Data Analysis**
  This approach uses datasets collected by other researchers or agencies (e.g., CDC, NCES, institutional surveys). It's ideal if you don't have access to a population or want to build on a large-scale study. You must confirm permission to use the dataset and evaluate whether it contains the variables you need.

All methods come with ethical responsibilities, including protecting privacy, minimizing risks, and collecting data only after IRB approval.

STEP 3: PREPARE MATERIALS AND TOOLS

Once you've finalized your data collection method, prepare all necessary materials, such as:

- Consent forms
- Recruitment flyers or emails
- Interview protocols or survey links
- Audio recorders or observation logs
- Secure folders for storing data

Test your tools before launching full data collection. For surveys, this means piloting the form with 1–2 people for clarity. For interviews, it means rehearsing your guide to ensure flow and neutrality.

Organize everything using participant ID numbers, not names. Set up clear file systems and regular backups.

STEP 4: RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Recruit your sample exactly as described in your IRB application. You might:

- Distribute flyers or digital announcements
- Ask clinical supervisors or faculty to share information
- Use email, social media, or referral networks

Keep a log of how many participants express interest, complete consent, or drop out. Note dates, outreach methods, and follow-up attempts.

STEP 5: OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT

Before collecting any data, ensure every participant provides **informed consent.** Your consent process should include:

- A clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits
- Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw
- How confidentiality will be protected
- Who to contact with questions or concerns

Store all signed consent forms in a secure, locked or encrypted location, separate from collected data.

STEP 6: COLLECT DATA CONSISTENTLY

Carry out your procedures exactly as approved. Record times, formats, and participant codes. For interviews or observations, record (with permission) and take notes. For surveys, monitor completion rates and follow up as needed (without pressure).

Be flexible and respectful. If a participant reschedules or becomes distressed, prioritize their comfort and autonomy.

STEP 7: MONITOR FOR ISSUES AND ADJUST IF NEEDED

Challenges may include:

- Low response rates
- Incomplete or inconsistent responses
- Participant confusion about instructions
- Scheduling difficulties or technical problems

Keep detailed notes on any difficulties. Contact your chair and, if necessary, the IRB before making any changes to your protocol.

END-OF-PHASE 5 CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

- [ ] I received written IRB approval and followed all requirements.
- [ ] I selected a data collection method aligned with my research question.
- [ ] I prepared all materials and tested my instruments or procedures.
- [ ] I recruited participants using IRB-approved methods.
- [ ] I obtained informed consent and securely stored documentation.
- [ ] I collected all data consistently and respectfully.
- [ ] I monitored for issues and documented any deviations.
- [ ] I followed ethical guidelines and stored data securely using ID codes.

ADVISOR

- [ ] Verified that the candidate received formal IRB approval and retained documentation
- [ ] Confirmed the data collection method matches the approved IRB protocol
- [ ] Reviewed all data collection tools (surveys, interviews, observation protocols, etc.) for clarity and alignment with study design
- [ ] Reviewed the informed consent process and materials to ensure compliance with ethical standards
- [ ] Ensured participant recruitment followed approved methods and was documented
- [ ] Discussed any reported issues or deviations from the plan (e.g., participant attrition, low response rates)
- [ ] Advised the candidate on whether IRB amendments are needed for any changes to protocol
- [ ] Confirmed that all data were collected respectfully, ethically, and stored securely using ID codes

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- [ ] Reviewed the candidate's finalized data collection tools or protocols
- [ ] Confirmed alignment between research question and data collection method
- [ ] Provided feedback on the practical implementation of procedures (e.g., interview quality, observation consistency)
- [ ] Discussed with the advisor any concerns regarding participant experience, recruitment equity, or ethical risk
- [ ] Reviewed a progress update from the candidate on data collection completion and challenges encountered
- [ ] Helped troubleshoot any data quality or recruitment issues as needed

PHASE 6: DATA ANALYSIS

PURPOSE

Now that you've completed data collection, the next step is to organize and analyze your data to answer your research question. This phase transforms raw information into meaningful patterns, statistics, or themes. Your goal is to conduct a trustworthy, ethical, and transparent analysis that directly supports your Results chapter in Phase 7.

STEP 1: ORGANIZE AND CLEAN YOUR DATA

Start by organizing everything you collected. Your data should be labeled, backed up, and clearly structured using participant IDs only. Here's how to prepare:

- **Quantitative data:** Enter into a spreadsheet or statistical software like SPSS, R, JASP, or Excel. Clean your data by:
    - Checking for missing or duplicate responses
    - Ensuring variable names and codes are clear
    - Converting responses to numeric values if needed
- **Qualitative data:** Ensure all interviews or open-ended responses are transcribed and de-identified. Organize transcripts in labeled folders, and create a coding structure to begin tagging and analyzing content.

Tip: Always keep a "raw" untouched copy of your dataset before making changes.

STEP 2: CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Select an analysis method that aligns with your research design. Below are options based on methodology:

- **Quantitative Designs**
    - Use descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations) to describe your sample
    - Use inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, correlations, regressions) to test hypotheses
    - Include test statistics, p-values, confidence intervals, and effect sizes
    - Make sure to check assumptions for each test (e.g., normality, homogeneity of variance)
- **Qualitative Designs**
    - Conduct coding using methods such as:
        - **Thematic analysis:** Identify themes across interviews
        - **Grounded theory:** Build a theory from the data
        - **Narrative analysis:** Examine personal stories or meaning-making
    - Use a coding framework (manual or software like NVivo, Dedoose, or even Excel)
    - Organize your findings into main themes and subthemes
    - Track your process in a codebook or analytic memo to maintain credibility
- **Mixed Methods**
    - Conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses separately
    - Then compare, contrast, or integrate findings to see how one explains the other
    - Be clear whether methods were used sequentially (one after the other) or concurrently (at the same time)

STEP 3: CONDUCT YOUR ANALYSIS

Begin your analysis with a plan:

- Write down your research questions again
- Create a table or document to track which results correspond to each question
- Keep notes on each analysis step you perform—this helps during writing and peer review

If you're using **statistics,** follow this order:

1. Run descriptive statistics
2. Conduct inferential analyses
3. Create tables or graphs as needed (e.g., bar charts, scatterplots, cross-tabs)

If you're using **coding,** follow this order:

1. Read transcripts closely
2. Highlight significant statements or patterns
3. Assign initial codes
4. Group codes into themes or categories
5. Record supporting quotes
6. Write up theme descriptions

Use precise, evidence-based language. Avoid making assumptions that go beyond your data.

STEP 4: ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RIGOR

For quantitative studies, rigor involves:

- Checking reliability and validity of your instruments
- Reporting effect sizes, confidence intervals, and assumptions
- Including non-significant results with transparency

For qualitative studies, ensure credibility by:

- Keeping an audit trail (memos, coding logs, decisions)
- Using peer review or discussion
- Including thick description and multiple quotes per theme
- Considering rival explanations or disconfirming evidence

Mixed-methods studies must include transparent integration of both strands.

STEP 5: PREPARE FOR THE RESULTS CHAPTER

After finishing your analysis:

- Summarize all findings in a clean, reader-friendly format
- Create APA-formatted tables and figures (for quantitative)
- Organize themes with definitions and supporting quotes (for qualitative)
- Make sure all findings directly address your research questions

Do not interpret what these findings mean yet—that comes in Phase 8.

END-OF-PHASE 6 CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

- [ ] I cleaned, labeled, and organized all data files using secure ID-based systems
- [ ] I selected an analysis method appropriate to my design (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed)
- [ ] I performed my analysis using appropriate software or manual tools
- [ ] I created tables, figures, and/or theme summaries to prepare for the Results chapter
- [ ] I maintained rigor through transparency, validity checks, or credibility strategies
- [ ] I documented all steps taken in a memo, syntax file, or codebook
- [ ] I refrained from interpreting results until the Discussion chapter

ADVISOR

- [ ] Confirmed that the candidate's data were properly cleaned, de-identified, and securely organized
- [ ] Reviewed the appropriateness of the selected analysis method in relation to the research question(s) and design
- [ ] Evaluated whether the analysis strategy and outputs (e.g., tables, themes, quotes, or test statistics) were accurately matched to the study design (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods)
- [ ] Reviewed a summary of findings for logical structure, clarity, and APA formatting (if applicable)
- [ ] Ensured that the candidate documented their analytic steps in a reproducible format (syntax file, codebook, memo, audit trail)
- [ ] Advised the candidate to defer all interpretation to the Discussion chapter and verified that no interpretation is present in analysis notes or figures
- [ ] Provided feedback on any inconsistencies or methodological concerns in advance of Phase 7
- [ ] Reviewed the Phase 6–related rubric items with the candidate to confirm alignment with scoring expectations for Results

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- [ ] Reviewed the candidate's summary of analytic procedures to ensure transparency and accuracy
- [ ] Evaluated whether the selected analysis method is conceptually aligned with the study design and research question
- [ ] Reviewed a representative table (quantitative) or theme summary (qualitative) to ensure clarity and fidelity to data
- [ ] Ensured that the candidate preserved rigor through reliability checks, audit trails, or software documentation
- [ ] Provided formative feedback regarding the clarity, structure, or completeness of analysis outputs
- [ ] Discussed the Results Section Components of the Capstone Rubric with the advisor and candidate to ensure Phase 6 preparation supports Phase 7 readiness

PHASE 7: WRITING THE RESULTS

PURPOSE

The Results chapter presents the findings from your data analysis. This section is factual and objective—it tells the reader what you found, not what the findings mean. Interpretation and implications will be addressed in the Discussion (Phase 8). Your job here is to clearly report the evidence that answers your research questions using text, tables, figures, and excerpts, depending on your method.

📊 METHOD–RESULT MATCH TABLE FOR REPORTING RESULTS

Research Question Type	Study Design	Recommended Results Format
"What is the relationship between X and Y?"	Quantitative (correlational/ regression)	Descriptive and inferential statistics; regression coefficients, effect sizes, APA-style tables
"Are there differences between groups?"	Quantitative (t-test, ANOVA)	Group means, standard deviations, test statistics (t, F), p-values, confidence intervals
"What is the experience of participants?"	Qualitative (phenomenology, narrative)	Thematic summaries, participant quotes, frequencies of endorsement if applicable
"What themes emerge in participants' responses?"	Qualitative (grounded theory, thematic analysis)	Organized themes with rich description and illustrative quotes
"What do both the numbers and narratives tell us?"	Mixed Methods	Present quantitative and qualitative results separately, then connect with a summary paragraph

STEP 1: ORGANIZE BY RESEARCH QUESTION

Structure your Results section by restating each research question or hypothesis, then reporting the findings that address it. Use subheadings to separate results for each question.

Example:

Research Question 1: Does supervision quality predict candidate stress levels?

To answer this question, a linear regression was conducted with perceived supervision quality as the independent variable...

This structure keeps your chapter focused and easy to follow.

STEP 2: REPORT QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

For quantitative projects, present results in two parts:

A. Descriptive Statistics

- Describe your sample (e.g., age, gender, roles, frequencies)
- Report means, standard deviations, ranges, and percentages
- Use APA-formatted tables for clarity

B. Inferential Statistics

- Present results from analyses (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, regression)
- Report test statistic, degrees of freedom, p-value, effect size, and confidence interval

Example:

An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in stress scores between candidates with and without fieldwork experience, $t(48) = 2.36$, $p = .022$, $d = 0.68$.

Use tables and figures to display data clearly, but describe all findings in the text as well. APA Tip: Every table or figure should be numbered, titled, and referenced in the body of your text (e.g., "see Table 2").

STEP 3: REPORT QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

For qualitative studies, your Results will focus on presenting the themes that emerged from your coding and analysis process.

Structure for Each Theme:

1. **Theme Title**
2. A short paragraph summarizing the theme
3. One to three representative quotes from participants (labeled with pseudonyms or ID numbers)

Example:

Theme 2: Emotional Disconnection in Remote Supervision

Participants described difficulty forming emotional connections with supervisors during virtual meetings. One candidate shared, "Even when she was trying to be supportive, I just felt like I was performing into a void."

You may also include a table listing:

- Each theme
- A definition or description
- Number of participants who endorsed it
- Representative quotes

Avoid interpreting why these themes exist—that belongs in the next chapter.

STEP 4: REPORT MIXED METHODS RESULTS

In a mixed methods project, report each strand of data separately.

- Begin with either quantitative or qualitative results, depending on your design
- Then summarize how findings from one method relate to or support the other
- Save full integration of both sets of findings for your Discussion chapter

Example:

Quantitative findings revealed that 60% of participants experienced moderate to high stress. Qualitative themes, including "fear of judgment" and "lack of feedback," suggest reasons for this elevated stress level.

STEP 5: BE CLEAR, ACCURATE, AND NEUTRAL

Use plain language and avoid interpreting or speculating about results. Stick to past tense.

Avoid:

- "This proves that…"
- "Participants felt that supervision was bad…"

Instead, say:

- "Participants described their experience as lacking support."
- "The regression model explained 32% of the variance in stress scores."

Also:

- Report all findings, even if they were non-significant or unexpected
- Do not remove data that does not support your hypothesis
- Be transparent about missing data or participant dropout

RESULTS SECTION MODELS

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS EXAMPLE

Research Question 1: Does level of perceived supervisory support predict stress among PsyD candidates?

A linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between supervisory support and candidate stress levels. Results indicated that supervisory support significantly predicted stress scores, $F(1, 48) = 9.76$, $p = .003$, $R^2 = .17$. The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = -.41$, $p = .003$) indicated that higher perceived support was associated with lower reported stress. See Table 1 for full regression results. All assumptions of linearity, independence, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals were met.

🟢 **Why this works:** It clearly reports statistical tests, includes exact values (F, p, β, R^2), and avoids interpretation.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS EXAMPLE

Theme 2: Emotional Disconnection in Remote Supervision

Participants consistently described feeling emotionally distant from their supervisors during virtual sessions. Several candidates shared that interactions felt "transactional" or "flat." One participant stated, "Even when she tried to be warm, it felt like I was talking into a screen, not a person." Another added, "There was a real lack of nuance or presence—I couldn't read her reactions." This theme was endorsed by 10 of 14 participants and highlights challenges in maintaining relational depth in remote supervision contexts.

🟢 **Why this works:** It begins with a theme label, includes summary and quotes, and quantifies participant endorsement without interpreting meaning.

MIXED METHODS RESULTS EXAMPLE

Quantitative analysis revealed that 62% of trainees reported moderate to high burnout levels on the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Qualitative interviews supported these findings, with multiple participants describing "constant emotional fatigue" and "feeling ineffective, no matter how hard I worked." The most frequently endorsed themes—"emotional depletion" and "lack of support"—help contextualize the high burnout rates. See Table 2 for thematic breakdown. Quantitative and qualitative findings appear consistent in highlighting trainee distress.

🟢 **Why this works:** It separates data strands, connects them cautiously, and uses neutral phrasing ("appear consistent").

END-OF-PHASE 7 CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

- [ ] I organized results by research question or hypothesis with subheadings
- [ ] I presented descriptive and inferential statistics (for quantitative projects)
- [ ] I clearly presented themes and representative quotes (for qualitative projects)
- [ ] I used APA-formatted tables and figures, referenced properly in the text
- [ ] I included all findings, whether significant or not
- [ ] I avoided interpretation or explanation of results
- [ ] I used clear, precise, and professional language in past tense

ADVISOR

- [ ] Reviewed the Results chapter for organization by research question or hypothesis
- [ ] Verified accuracy and completeness of all descriptive and inferential statistics
- [ ] Ensured APA 7-compliant formatting for all tables and figures, with proper labeling and referencing
- [ ] Checked that qualitative results include thematic summaries and representative quotes, labeled appropriately
- [ ] For mixed methods: confirmed results are reported in parallel, then synthesized cautiously
- [ ] Ensured results are reported in a neutral, objective tone—without interpretation or conclusions
- [ ] Verified that non-significant findings and missing data are transparently reported
- [ ] Cross-checked results with the approved methodology and IRB materials
- [ ] Provided targeted feedback on any rubric items needing revision or clarification
- [ ] Reviewed the Results Components section of the Capstone Rubric (Appendix C) with the candidate, addressing each item explicitly

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- [ ] Reviewed the Results chapter for clarity, neutrality, and alignment with the research questions
- [ ] Verified that quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods findings are appropriately structured and reported
- [ ] Confirmed inclusion of APA-formatted tables and figures, referenced in the narrative
- [ ] Evaluated whether themes are clearly titled, summarized, and supported by participant data
- [ ] Ensured that no interpretation or discussion has been included in this chapter
- [ ] Confirmed that the reporting aligns with the approved methods and IRB procedures
- [ ] Reviewed all reported results—including any that are null, unexpected, or incomplete
- [ ] Provided specific, formative feedback on any rubric criteria not yet fully met
- [ ] Reviewed and signed off on the Results Components of the Capstone Rubric with the advisor and candidate

PHASE 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

PURPOSE

The Discussion and Conclusion chapter is where you interpret your findings, explain what they mean, and describe their importance to psychology, clinical practice, and future research. This chapter moves beyond reporting data—it shows your ability to think critically, integrate evidence, and reflect on the limitations and broader relevance of your work.

STEP 1: RESTATE THE PURPOSE AND SUMMARIZE KEY RESULTS

Begin with a brief reminder of your research question(s) and what you set out to explore. Then, summarize your major findings—no new data, just a short recap of what was presented in Phase 7.

Example:

This study explored how supervision quality relates to stress among PsyD candidates. Results showed that candidates who rated their supervisors higher in empathy and availability reported lower perceived stress scores.

This section orients the reader and sets up the discussion that follows.

STEP 2: INTERPRET THE FINDINGS

Explain what your results mean in relation to your literature review, theory, and existing research. Think critically about why you found what you did, and how it compares to previous studies.

Questions to consider:

- Do your results confirm or contradict existing research?
- What might explain unexpected findings?
- What patterns emerged that deserve attention?

Use academic, non-speculative language.

Examples:

“These findings support prior research by Gomez and Lee (2019), who found that perceived supervisory support is a protective factor for graduate candidate mental health.”

“Unexpectedly, candidates in their second year reported higher stress levels than first-year candidates, which may reflect increased academic or clinical demands.”

STEP 3: ADDRESS CLINICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Discuss how your findings can be used in real-world settings. Be specific about how clinicians, educators, or organizations might benefit from your research.

Examples:

1. Should supervisors receive additional training?
2. Could your findings inform new practices at training sites or in clinical education?
3. Are there policy or program changes that could result?

Make sure the implications are based on your actual findings—not assumptions.

STEP 4: ACKNOWLEDGE LIMITATIONS

Every study has limitations. A transparent discussion of these issues strengthens your credibility. Consider:

- Sample size or generalizability
- Self-report bias or measurement issues
- Incomplete data
- Time constraints or scope limitations

Example:

The study sample was limited to one university, and most participants identified as White and female, which limits generalizability to more diverse populations.

Then pivot—briefly note how future research could address these gaps.

STEP 5: RECOMMEND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on your findings and limitations, propose areas that future studies could explore.

Examples:

1. Studying a more diverse or larger population
2. Testing your findings with different clinical settings or training models
3. Using a longitudinal design to track outcomes over time

Be specific and practical. Suggest 1–3 areas where your work could lead to further inquiry.

STEP 6: WRITE A STRONG CONCLUSION

End your study with a clear, thoughtful summary. Restate the importance of your topic and what your study contributes.

Example:

This capstone adds to the growing body of research on graduate candidate wellness and emphasizes the role of supervision in protecting against academic stress. While limited in scope, the study offers meaningful insight into how training environments can promote resilience in emerging clinicians.

Keep it concise. Your final paragraph should echo your introduction but with the wisdom gained through your research process.

END-OF-PHASE 8 CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

- [ ] I clearly restated my research purpose and summarized key results.
- [ ] I interpreted findings in relation to theory and existing research.
- [ ] I discussed the clinical and practical implications of my findings.
- [ ] I addressed limitations and explained their impact.
- [ ] I provided 1–3 thoughtful suggestions for future research.
- [ ] I wrote a concise conclusion that reflects the overall contribution of my work.
- [ ] I revised this chapter for tone, clarity, and connection to the literature review.

ADVISOR

- [ ] Verified that the candidate restated the study's purpose and summarized the key results
- [ ] Reviewed the candidate's interpretation of findings in relation to theory and the literature review
- [ ] Evaluated the accuracy and scope of clinical and practical implications
- [ ] Confirmed that study limitations are transparently addressed, with suggestions for how they might be mitigated in future work
- [ ] Reviewed the candidate's proposed directions for future research, ensuring they are practical and evidence-based
- [ ] Assessed the strength, clarity, and tone of the concluding paragraph
- [ ] Provided constructive feedback on any gaps in alignment between the chapter and the rubric expectations
- [ ] Ensured that the chapter demonstrates scholarly depth, APA formatting, and thematic consistency with earlier sections
- [ ] Reviewed the Discussion Components section of the Capstone Rubric with the candidate, addressing each item directly

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- [ ] Read and evaluated the discussion chapter for alignment with the study's design, results, and literature base
- [ ] Verified that interpretations are supported by data and do not overreach
- [ ] Evaluated the clarity and relevance of clinical/practical implications
- [ ] Reviewed acknowledgment of limitations and checked for transparency in scope and generalizability
- [ ] Considered whether the candidate has proposed meaningful and feasible areas for future research
- [ ] Confirmed that the conclusion provides a cohesive and appropriately scaled summary of the study's contribution
- [ ] Provided targeted suggestions for strengthening analytic depth, integration, or scholarly tone, as needed
- [ ] Reviewed and signed off on the Discussion Components section of the Capstone Rubric in collaboration with the advisor and candidate

FINAL SUBMISSION AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

PURPOSE

The final stage of your capstone journey is submission and approval. At this point, your document should be complete, polished, and ready to meet university, program, and APA formatting standards. This phase ensures that your project is accepted by your chair and committee, archived correctly by the university, and eligible for inclusion in your graduation file.

FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

Your completed capstone must follow **APA 7th edition style** precisely and consistently. That includes:

- **Margins:** 1 inch on all sides
- **Font:** 12-point Times New Roman (or approved APA alternatives: 11-point Arial, Calibri, or Georgia)
- **Spacing:** Double-spaced throughout, including the reference list and block quotes
- **Page numbers:** Top-right corner, starting with the title page
- **Headings:** Use APA-style heading levels consistently
- **Tables and figures:** Follow APA formatting rules, numbered and titled, and referenced in the text
- **References:** Alphabetized, in-text citations matched with reference list entries

Tip: Before submitting, use the Purdue OWL or APA Guide to cross-check common formatting errors. Ask a peer or the FMU Writing Center for a final review if needed.

REQUIRED COMPONENTS

Your final capstone document must include the following elements in this exact order:

1. **Title Page**
    - Project title
    - Your name
    - Degree designation and program (PsyD in Health Service Psychology with a combined emphasis in Clinical-School Psychology)
    - Francis Marion University
    - Submission date
    - Committee members and their roles
2. **Abstract**
    - 150–250 word summary of the project's background, purpose, methods, key findings, and conclusions
3. **Table of Contents**
    - Include page numbers and headings/subheadings for each chapter
4. **List of Tables and/or Figures (if applicable)**
    - Each table and figure should be listed with a title and page number
5. **Main Body of the Capstone**
    - Introduction
    - Literature Review
    - Methodology
    - Results
    - Discussion and Conclusion

6. **References**
    - APA 7 formatted list of all sources cited in the paper
7. **Appendices** (if applicable)
    - Informed consent forms
    - Interview guides
    - IRB approval letter
    - Data collection instruments or codebooks

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic and research integrity throughout the capstone process. This includes properly citing all sources, following APA 7th edition formatting and scholarly writing conventions, and reporting data honestly and accurately. Students must also acknowledge all individuals who contribute substantively to their work, including collaborators and co-authors, and must avoid any form of data fabrication, falsification, or ethical misconduct. Any such concerns must be reported immediately to the Program Director and may result in consequences including project failure, academic probation, or referral to the Graduate Council.

As part of the final submission process, all capstone manuscripts will be screened using university-approved plagiarism detection tools (e.g., Turnitin, SafeAssign) to ensure originality and citation integrity. In addition, manuscripts will be reviewed for the unauthorized use of artificial intelligence (AI). Candidates may only use AI tools for minor support tasks such as grammar correction, APA formatting assistance, or reference generation. The use of AI for content creation—including generating literature reviews, methodologies, results, or discussion sections—is strictly prohibited. Unauthorized use of AI-generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity and is subject to remediation, academic penalties, or formal disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Once your chair and committee approve the final version of your manuscript:

1. **Submit a final electronic copy** in Microsoft Word and/or PDF format to the FMU Capstone Repository or university library system
2. **Submit a bound hard copy** if required by the department or for personal record-keeping
3. **Submit any required forms** including:
    - Capstone Approval Cover Sheet
    - IRB Closure/Final Report Form
    - Candidate Copyright Agreement (if applicable)

All final copies should be professionally edited, paginated correctly, and submitted by the university's deadline for graduation clearance.

https://www.cognitoforms.com/PsychologyDepartment1/CapstoneSubmissionPortalLink

To be cleared for graduation, you must ensure the following:

- All capstone revisions are completed and approved by your committee
- Final version is submitted and archived according to FMU requirements
- IRB documentation is closed and filed (if you collected original data)
- All graduation forms are submitted and approved by the Registrar's Office
- Any other university obligations (fees, library holds, etc.) are resolved

Be proactive. Do not wait until the week of graduation to submit your capstone—formatting issues or minor errors can delay approval.

PROPOSAL AND DEFENSE PROCESS

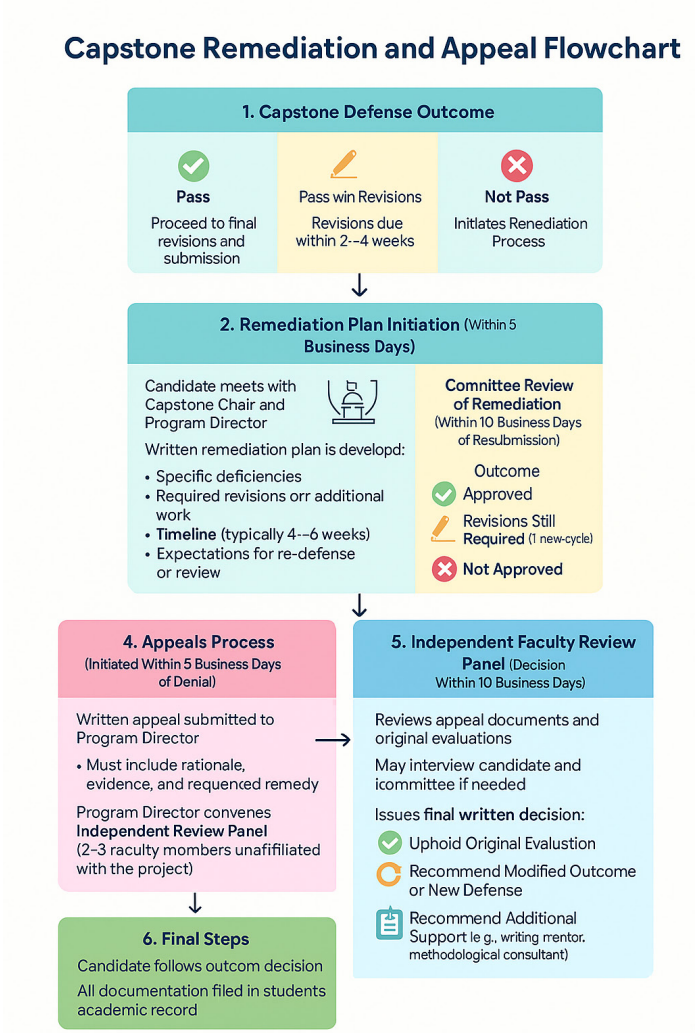
All PsyD candidates must submit and successfully defend a proposal (typically Chapters 1–3) before collecting data. The proposal defense is a formal meeting with your chair and committee to present your literature review, research questions, and proposed methodology.

Following the defense, your committee will determine whether your proposal is: (1) Approved as-is, (2) Approved with minor or major revisions, or (3) Not approved. You may not proceed with data collection until IRB approval is granted following a successful proposal defense.

After completing all phases of the capstone, you will participate in a final oral defense. This defense includes a presentation (often via PowerPoint) and a Q&A session with your committee. The final defense should be between 30 minutes and two hours, but cannot be less than 30 minutes or more than two hours. Outcomes typically include: pass, pass with revisions, or not pass. Your chair will guide you in preparing for both stages.

CAPSTONE APPEALS AND REMEDIATION POLICY

If a student does not pass the capstone proposal or final defense, the committee will provide a written summary identifying specific concerns and required revisions. A remediation plan, including a timeline for revision, will be developed collaboratively with the Program Director and the thesis advisor. Once revisions are completed, the student may schedule a second defense. In cases of disagreement over capstone evaluation or committee process, the student may submit a formal written appeal to the Program Director. An independent faculty panel may be convened to review the matter and determine a resolution consistent with program policies and university standards.



FMU RED DAY PRESENTATION

Each spring, Francis Marion University hosts **RED Day (Research & Exhibition Day)** to celebrate the scholarly work of candidates across disciplines. All PsyD candidates are expected to present a **poster summarizing their capstone research** during their final spring semester.

This event typically occurs in **April** and provides a valuable opportunity to communicate your findings to a broader academic and professional audience, including faculty, peers, and community members.

- Posters are typically due for faculty review and printing **1–2 weeks prior to the event.**
- Candidates should work with their faculty advisor and the Capstone Coordinator to format, edit, and finalize their posters.
- **Printing costs are covered by the Psychology Program** and should not be incurred by candidates.

Participation in RED Day is a **program requirement for graduation** and is intended to mirror professional conference presentation experiences. Poster guidelines and templates will be provided by the Capstone Coordinator.

PROFESSIONAL DISSEMINATION: PRESENTATION AND PUBLICATION

All capstone projects will be formally presented to fellow PsyD candidates, faculty, and invited guests during a department-hosted event at the close of the internship year. This presentation typically occurs in the week leading up to graduation and serves as the final scholarly milestone for candidates in the program.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION EXPECTATIONS

PsyD candidates are strongly encouraged to **submit at least one abstract** to a regional or national professional psychology conference prior to graduation. Conference options include, but are not limited to:

- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- American Psychological Association (APA)
- Southeastern Psychological Association (SEPA)
- Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT)

Consult with your Capstone Chair to determine which venues align best with your topic and to ensure proper authorship and citation practices. Submitted abstracts should reflect co-authorship with your Capstone Chair and Committee Members, and **Francis Marion University, Department of Psychology** must be listed as the sponsoring institution.

PUBLICATION EXPECTATIONS

Candidates are also encouraged to prepare a manuscript of their capstone project for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. While not a graduation requirement, publication demonstrates scholarly rigor and enhances your professional profile.

Common journals include:

- *School Psychology Review*
- *Journal of Clinical Psychology*
- *Psychology in the Schools*
- *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*
- *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*

You should target your manuscript to a specific journal early in the writing process, aligning your formatting and tone accordingly. The primary responsibility for preparing the manuscript lies with the candidate, though Capstone Chairs and committee members are expected to provide editorial guidance and support.
If a manuscript has not been submitted by six months post-graduation, the committee may—at their discretion—revise and submit the work. In such cases, the revising faculty member may assume first authorship, with appropriate credit given to all contributors and notification sent to the graduate.

FINAL SUBMISSION & GRADUATION CHECKLIST

CANDIDATE

- ☐ My document is formatted in APA 7th edition style throughout
- ☐ All required components are included in the correct order
- ☐ I revised the final version based on committee feedback
- ☐ I obtained all required signatures and approvals
- ☐ I submitted my capstone to FMU's digital repository or designated platform
- ☐ I completed all graduation paperwork and resolved any holds
- ☐ I archived a personal digital copy for future reference or publication

ADVISOR

- ☐ Reviewed all final manuscript components for APA 7 style, formatting, and completeness
- ☐ Confirmed that the capstone includes all required chapters and appendices in correct order
- ☐ Verified incorporation of all committee-requested revisions

- [ ] Completed the “Written Delivery” section of the Capstone Rubric in Appendix C
- [ ] Evaluated the scholarly quality of the final manuscript, including clarity, integration of literature, and alignment with research question
- [ ] Ensure the final manuscript complies with university academic integrity policies, including screening for plagiarism and unauthorized use of artificial intelligence (AI). Only formatting, grammar, or reference assistance may be supported by AI tools; content generation using AI is prohibited and constitutes a violation of capstone policy.
- [ ] Supervised and assessed the student’s oral defense using the “Oral Defense” rubric section in Appendix C
- [ ] Verified that IRB closure or final report documentation has been submitted (if applicable)
- [ ] Reviewed and approved the student’s RED Day poster or professional presentation
- [ ] Signed the Capstone Approval Cover Sheet and confirmed final archive submission
- [ ] Provided final guidance regarding manuscript refinement for potential journal submission
- [ ] Confirmed that all graduation and Registrar forms are complete and approved

COMMITTEE MEMBER

- [ ] Reviewed the final capstone manuscript and verified that it meets expectations for scholarly writing, argumentation, and formatting
- [ ] Provided timely feedback on any remaining revisions prior to submission
- [ ] Ensure the final manuscript complies with university academic integrity policies, including screening for plagiarism and unauthorized use of artificial intelligence (AI). Only formatting, grammar, or reference assistance may be supported by AI tools; content generation using AI is prohibited and constitutes a violation of capstone policy.
- [ ] Reviewed the final RED Day poster or professional presentation draft, if requested
- [ ] Verified inclusion of all tables, figures, appendices, and IRB documentation (if applicable)
- [ ] Supported post-defense dissemination discussions (e.g., publication or conference presentation)
- [ ] Completed the “Written Delivery” rubric section in Appendix C independently or collaboratively with the chair
- [ ] Attended and evaluated the oral defense using the “Oral Defense” section of the Capstone Rubric in Appendix C

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FORM 1

FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY PSYD CAPSTONE: CAPSTONE CHAIR AGREEMENT

Candidate's Name: _____ Class of _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Capstone Chair Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Proposed Capstone Topic: _____

_____

_____

_____

CHAIR AGREEMENT

By signing below, I agree to serve as the Capstone Chair for the candidate listed above throughout the duration of their doctoral capstone project. I have reviewed the Capstone Handbook and understand my responsibilities as outlined therein. I agree to:

- Provide consistent mentorship through all phases of the capstone process, from topic development through final defense.
- Review and approve the proposal prior to IRB submission and assist in selecting the appropriate level of IRB review.
- Provide timely, constructive feedback on all written chapters and drafts.
- Return revisions within 10–14 business days unless otherwise agreed upon.
- Facilitate communication and collaboration between committee members as needed.
- Notify the Capstone Coordinator if the candidate is not meeting expected deadlines or academic requirements.
- Ensure final manuscript follows academic integrity policies, including prohibition of AI-generated content beyond editing or formatting support.
- Support the candidate in preparing for conference submissions, RED Day presentations, and potential publications.

Capstone Chair Signature: _____ Date: _____

Candidate Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B: FORM 2

FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY PSYD CAPSTONE: COMMITTEE MEMBER AGREEMENT

Candidate's Name: _____ Class of _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Capstone Chair Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Capstone Committee Member Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Proposed Capstone Topic: _____

_____

_____

_____

COMMITTEE MEMBER AGREEMENT

By signing below, I agree to serve on the capstone committee for the candidate listed above. I have reviewed the Capstone Handbook and discussed expectations with the candidate and chair. I agree to:

- Offer subject-matter expertise and guidance throughout the capstone process.
- Attend at least three committee meetings over the duration of the project.
- Provide timely feedback on the literature review, methodology, results, and final manuscript.
- Return comments and edits within 10–14 business days of receiving drafts.
- Encourage dissemination of findings through professional presentations or publications.
- Advocate for the candidate's academic and professional growth throughout the project.
- Ensure final manuscript follows academic integrity policies.

Capstone Committee Member Signature: _____ Date: _____

Candidate Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: CAPSTONE EVALUATION RUBRIC

This rubric is used to evaluate doctoral capstone projects in clinical psychology. Each criterion is scored from 1 to 5 based on defined behavioral anchors to ensure interrater reliability. Scores of 3 represent satisfactory graduate-level performance, while scores of 4 and 5 represent high and exemplary performance, respectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW COMPONENTS

SPECIFIC TOPIC DOMAIN

1 - Topic is unspecified, unfocused
2 - Topic is minimally defined and lacks direction
3 - Insufficient topic breadth or depth
4 - Topic is mostly appropriate with minor tangents or gaps
5 - Appropriate breadth; only relevant work cited

JUSTIFIED CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION FROM REVIEW

1 - Did not discuss the criteria for inclusion or exclusion
2 - Criteria mentioned but not connected to review content
3 - Discussed the literature included and excluded
4 - Criteria generally supported by rationale
5 - Justified inclusion and exclusion of literature

DISTINGUISHED WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE FIELD FROM WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

1 - Did not distinguish what has and has not been done
2 - Vaguely mentioned gaps without clarity
3 - Discussed what has and has not been done
4 - Clear identification of existing gaps
5 - Critically examined the state of the field

PLACED THE TOPIC OR PROBLEM IN THE BROADER SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

1 - Topic not placed in broader scholarly literature
2 - Minimal reference to broader scholarship
3 - Some discussion of broader scholarly literature
4 - Topic mostly situated in broader literature
5 - Topic clearly situated in broader scholarly literature

PLACED THE RESEARCH IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE FIELD

1 - History of topic not discussed
2 - Brief or incomplete historical references
3 - Some mention of history of topic
4 - Adequate overview of historical context
5 - Critically examined history of topic

ACQUIRED AND ENHANCED THE SUBJECT VOCABULARY

1 - Key vocabulary not discussed
2 - Basic definitions listed with limited clarity
3 - Key vocabulary defined
4 - Defined with examples and partial analysis
5 - Key vocabulary defined, discussed, and resolved ambiguities

ARTICULATED IMPORTANT VARIABLES AND PHENOMENA RELEVANT TO THE TOPIC

1 - Key variables and phenomena not discussed
2 - Mentioned variables without connections
3 - Reviewed relationships among key variables
4 - Connected key variables to broader issues
5 - Noted ambiguities and proposed new relationships

SYNTHESIZED AND GAINED A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE LITERATURE

1 - Accepted literature at face value
2 - Minimal synthesis or criticism evident
3 - Some criticism of the literature
4 - Integrated and critiqued literature appropriately
5 - Offered new perspective or insight

IDENTIFIED THE MAIN METHODOLOGIES AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES USED IN THE FIELD

1 - Research methods not discussed
2 - Methods mentioned but not evaluated
3 - Some discussion of research methods to produce claims
4 - Analysis of common methods' strengths/limitations
5 - Critiqued methods and proposed alternatives

RELATED IDEAS AND THEORIES IN THE FIELD TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

1 - Research methods not discussed
2 - Minimal or inaccurate connection of theory to methods
3 - Some discussion of research methods to warrant claims
4 - General critique of appropriateness
5 - Thorough critique linking methods to claims

INTEGRATION OF LITERATURE

1 - Studies are cited without linking them to each other or to a coherent argument.
2 - Studies are grouped together but not clearly connected.
3 - Studies are cited with some linkage, but synthesis is underdeveloped.
4 - Studies are synthesized and connected logically with some minor gaps.
5 - Studies are well integrated and fluently synthesized to support a coherent argument.

ESTABLISH IMPORTANCE OF TOPIC

1 - Topic is presented without reference to its importance or relevance.
2 - Topic is briefly introduced, but importance is unclear.
3 - Some indication of the topic's relevance or importance is noted.
4 - Importance of topic is described with basic rationale.
5 - Topic importance is clearly established and justified with scholarly support.

RATIONALIZED THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1 - No discussion of why the research is practically significant.
2 - Practical significance is mentioned but not explained.
3 - Practical significance is discussed in basic terms.
4 - Practical significance is supported with examples and rationale.
5 - Practical significance is thoughtfully critiqued and linked to practice or outcomes.

RATIONALIZED THE SCHOLARLY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1 - No mention of how the study contributes to scholarly understanding.
2 - Scholarly significance is briefly mentioned but underdeveloped.
3 - Scholarly significance is discussed in moderate detail.
4 - Scholarly significance is supported with relevant context and justification.
5 - Scholarly significance is thoroughly critiqued and connected to gaps in the literature.

IDENTIFY RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

1 - No research opportunity identified or implied.
2 - General reference to a gap in the field without specifics.
3 - Gaps in research are noted and some opportunities identified.
4 - Clear identification of a gap and rationale for addressing it.
5 - Innovative research opportunity is articulated and strongly grounded in prior work.

DEMONSTRATE COMMAND OF FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS (I.E., THEORY, MODELS) RELATED TO LITERATURE

1 - Foundational concepts are absent or mentioned superficially.
2 - Basic concepts are named but not defined or explained.
3 - Foundational theories or models are defined but with limited clarity.
4 - Concepts are explained with moderate clarity and relevance.
5 - Foundational concepts are clearly presented and appropriately applied.

HYPOTHESIS

1 - No hypothesis stated or completely unrelated to literature.
2 - Hypothesis is unclear or does not follow logically from literature.
3 - Main hypotheses are stated clearly with directional predictions, but unclear alignment to literature.
4 - Hypotheses are testable, directional, and mostly aligned with prior research.
5 - Hypotheses are clearly derived from literature and articulated in testable terms.

RESEARCH DESIGN & EXECUTION COMPONENTS

RESEARCH DESIGN

1 - Design is not appropriate for the hypothesis.
2 - Design partially aligns with the hypothesis but lacks internal consistency or coherence.
3 - Design is complete and appropriate, but not clearly described.
4 - Design is clearly described with some detail but may lack full clarity in procedures or control conditions.
5 - The design of the study is clear and complete and appropriate to test the hypothesis.

VARIABLES

1 - Variables are not operationalized or are not valid.
2 - Variables are partially operationalized or lack conceptual clarity.
3 - Variables are appropriately operationalized, but may be simplistic.
4 - Variables are operationalized with moderate complexity and clear connection to constructs.
5 - Variables are appropriate and operationalized properly.

SAMPLE

1 - Sample is not complete given the hypotheses.
2 - Sample characteristics are only partially described or do not align well with hypotheses.
3 - Sample is appropriate given hypotheses, although may be small.
4 - Sample size and selection are reasonable and generally aligned with hypotheses.
5 - Sample is appropriate given hypotheses and large enough for power.

PARTICIPANTS

1 - Participants are poorly described; replication would not be possible.
2 - Basic demographic information is provided, but lacks detail on inclusion/exclusion criteria.
3 - A relevant characteristic may be missing from the description or does not include recruitment criteria.
4 - Participants are well described with some inclusion/exclusion information; minor detail may be lacking.
5 - Participant information includes number and all necessary characteristics. Exclusions and recruitment criteria are noted.

MATERIALS

1 - Materials are incomplete and lacking in validity. They are not fully described or included in an appendix.
2 - Materials are partially described but may lack clarity or rationale.
3 - Materials are appropriate, but not complete or not checked for reliability. The description is adequate, but could use more detail. The measures are appended or cited, as needed.
4 - Materials are clearly described and mostly appropriate with evidence of some reliability checking.
5 - Materials are appropriate given hypotheses and pilot tested and/or checked for reliability. They are described with enough detail that a reader could replicate the study and appended if self-created, cited if not.

PROCEDURE

1 - Procedure is not appropriate or not ethical. The description is unclear, or many major details are absent.
2 - Procedure is described generally, but lacks essential details or justification for ethical safeguards.
3 - Procedure is appropriate and ethical. The description is primarily complete, but some minor details may be missing, or some procedural aspects could be explained more clearly.
4 - Procedure is logically ordered and ethically sound with sufficient detail to understand steps.
5 - Procedure is appropriate and ethical. It is described, in order, with enough detail that a reader could replicate the study; instructions and protocol are included. Condition assignments are clear; randomization and counterbalancing are explained as necessary.

RESULTS COMPONENTS

DATA REDUCTION

1 - The scoring or coding scheme for the dependent variable is inappropriate for the study design. The explanation is confusing or missing, making it difficult to understand how the data were reduced, even when reviewing the results.
2 - Scoring or coding scheme is minimally described. Key steps in data reduction are unclear, and interrater reliability or data cleaning methods are omitted.
3 - The measurement and coding scheme are appropriate and understandable. However, data cleaning, outlier handling, or interrater reliability may be missing or inadequately described.
4 - Data reduction procedures are clearly described. Coding schemes are appropriate, and basic information about reliability and data cleaning is included.
5 - Measurement and coding of the dependent variable are clearly explained and appropriate for the design. Interrater reliability is calculated, and all procedures for data cleaning and scoring are explicitly detailed.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

1 - Descriptive statistics are inappropriate for the type of data or are computed inaccurately. Required tables or figures are omitted or poorly constructed.
2 - Descriptive statistics are used, but some are inappropriate or misinterpreted. Tables or figures are confusing, incorrect, or difficult to follow.
3 - Descriptive statistics are appropriate and correctly calculated. Tables or figures are present but may contain minor formatting issues or unclear presentation.
4 - Descriptive statistics are accurate and clearly presented. Tables and figures are mostly correct and well-organized by variable.
5 - Descriptive statistics are fully appropriate, accurate, and presented clearly with well-organized tables and figures. All visuals are referenced and enhance understanding of the data.

INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

1 - Inferential statistics do not appropriately address the hypotheses. Incorrect statistical tests are used, or results are reported inaccurately with missing critical information.
2 - Some relevant inferential statistics are presented, but there may be errors in reporting, omission of necessary post hoc tests, or lack of clarity linking statistics to the hypotheses.
3 - Inferential statistics are correctly used and reported. However, results may be incomplete, such as missing effect sizes or unclear relevance to hypotheses.
4 - Statistical analyses are appropriate and address most hypotheses. Results are mostly well-explained and supported by APAfor matted statistics.
5 - Inferential statistics are thoroughly appropriate for testing all hypotheses. Findings are clearly explained in plain language and supported with accurate APA-style reporting.

DISCUSSION COMPONENTS

INTERPRETATION

1 - Discussion incorrectly states the results or is a rehash of the introduction without clearly presenting the current study. The take-home message of the study is not clear.
2 - Discussion attempts to explain the findings, but the interpretation is unclear, overly broad, or not clearly linked to specific results.
3 - Discussion includes a restatement of the findings, but the analysis of their meaning may be weak or not well connected to the hypothesis. There may be lack of consideration for the broader psychological problem. Only some results are explained (esp. only positive), or the links to the previous literature simply restate the introduction.
4 - Discussion links most findings to hypotheses, and addresses some unexpected results. The broader relevance is discussed but may lack integration with prior literature.
5 - Discussion includes a restatement of the findings. Patterns of data and relations among the variables are explained and conclusions do not go beyond the data. The explanation/interpretation is well connected to the hypotheses and to the broader psychological problem as represented in the introduction. Any discrepancies between the expected results and the actual data are explained. The take-home message is clearly summarized at the end.

EVALUATION

1 - Potential confounds and methodological limits may be listed but may be inaccurate, incomplete, or very unclear.
2 - Lists some limitations or confounds, but discussion is vague or lacks depth. Minimal attention given to generalizability.
3 - Potential confounds or methodological limits are discussed as appropriate, and future research is suggested. Author has not considered to what extent the results are conclusive and can be generalized.
4 - Addresses confounds and generalizability issues. Acknowledges study limitations with moderate insight and suggests directions for future research.
5 - Author has considered to what extent the results are conclusive and can be generalized. Potential confounds or methodological limitations are discussed as appropriate, and future research is suggested.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

1 - Little understanding of or identification of implications for future research.
2 - Implications are overly general or not clearly connected to findings.
3 - Indicates where future research might improve.
4 - Discusses several meaningful ways future studies can expand upon or refine the findings.
5 - Has implications for knowledge in the field.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY OR PRACTICE

1 - No or insignificant implications for educational policy or practice.
2 - Implications are vaguely stated or lack practical application.
3 - Findings and conclusions have implications for educational policy or practice.
4 - Identifies specific policy or practice improvements linked to study findings.
5 - Makes novel contribution to policy development or practice.

REFERENCE LIST COMPONENTS

BREADTH OF RESOURCES

1 - Limited number and/or variety of resources available on the topic or did not show awareness of specialized sources
2 - Moderate number of sources with some variety
3 - Reasonable number and variety of sources used for topic
4 - Wide range of relevant and reputable sources used
5 - Exhaustive search that utilizes a comprehensive number and a full range of types of sources available for topic

DEPTH AND UNDERSTANDING

1 - Depth of understanding underdeveloped by a lack of citations from historical, theoretical background resources
2 - Understanding demonstrated in isolated areas; minimal theoretical depth
3 - Depth of understanding developed as demonstrated through the citation of a substantial number of historical, theoretical, background resources available for the topic
4 - Shows consistent and thoughtful application of background knowledge
5 - Depth of understanding exemplary as demonstrated through the exhaustive citation of historical, theoretical background resources available for topic

SCHOLARLINESS

1 - Majority of resources superficial/weak
2 - Some scholarly resources used but lacking balance or depth
3 - Majority of resources were scholarly, peer reviewed and reasonable number of empirical research studies
4 - Strong foundation of peer-reviewed sources and well-chosen empirical studies
5 - A rich representation of quality, peer reviewed empirical research resources, very scholarly

CURRENCY

1 - Not current - majority of references older than 10 years from date of project completion
2 - Many sources outdated, though some are recent
3 - The majority of the resources published 5 years or less from date of project completion
4 - Most references published within past 3–5 years
5 - Extremely current - majority of reference within 3 years of project completion

RELEVANCY

1 - Majority of sources do not relate/pertain to topic
2 - Some relevant sources included, but several are tangential
3 - Sources generally support/pertain to the topic
4 - Sources clearly related to topic and support claims well
5 - Sources directly on target and support/pertain to topic

WRITTEN DELIVERY COMPONENTS

WAS WRITTEN WITH A COHERENT, CLEAR STRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTED THE REVIEW

1 - Poorly conceptualized, haphazard
2 - Some structure evident, but lacks cohesion
3 - Some coherent structure
4 - Generally well organized, logical transitions
5 - Well developed, coherent and logically sequenced

COHERENCE

1 - Does not develop ideas cogently, organize them logically within paragraphs or connect them with clear transitions
2 - Paragraphs disjointed; ideas are loosely connected
3 - Develops and organizes ideas in paragraphs that are not necessarily connected with transitions; some ideas may seem illogical and/or unrelated
4 - Most paragraphs flow logically with transitional cues
5 - Develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically within paragraphs, and connects them with effective transitions

OVERALL ORGANIZATION

1 - Ineffective overall organization
2 - Some major sections misaligned or poorly placed
3 - Uneven organization: some sections well organized and others ineffective
4 - Mostly consistent structure with clear flow
5 - Clear and well organized throughout

CONVENTIONS OF WRITTEN ENGLISH

1 - Contains a combination of errors that frequently interfere with meaning
2 - Frequent grammar, punctuation, or word choice errors that sometimes interfere with meaning
3 - Competence with the conventions of Standard Written English, but may have some errors
4 - Minor, infrequent errors that do not interfere with readability
5 - Superior facility with the conventions of Standard Written English

CRITICAL THINKING

1 - Contains no interpretations, inferences, analysis, synthesis, or judgments
2 - Basic level of thinking present but lacks clarity or connection between ideas
3 - Contains some interpretations, inferences, analysis, synthesis, or judgments, but not enough
4 - Demonstrates thoughtful engagement with material using clear logic and analysis
5 - Contains appropriate amount of interpretations, inferences, analysis, synthesis, or judgments

APA STYLE

1 - Does not follow APA style
2 - Minimal attempt to follow APA style; frequent errors in formatting, citations, or references
3 - Attempts to follow APA style, but does not do so well
4 - Mostly follows APA style with only minor and infrequent errors
5 - Follows APA style very well

ORAL DEFENSE

DEMONSTRATE EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

1 - No apparent organization; presentation rambles
2 - Presentation has minimal structure; ideas loosely connected
3 - Organization loses track; transitions lacking
4 - Mostly organized with some clear transitions
5 - Presentation is organized with clear transitions

EYE CONTACT

1 - Weak eye contact, given less than 50% of the time
2 - Eye contact given about 60% of the time; some avoidance
3 - Does not look at all audience members, eye contact given 75% of the time
4 - Looks at most of the room; eye contact given 80-90% of the time
5 - Looks around room at all audience members, eye contact given 90 - 100% of the time

RESPONDED EFFECTIVELY TO QUESTIONS

1 - Defensive interaction, halting or hesitant; avoided direct questions
2 - Responses were vague or off-topic; confidence lacking
3 - Inconsistent quality of responses; sporadic confidence
4 - Clear responses to most questions; occasional hesitation
5 - Sustained confidence; answered questions directly and adequately

VOCAL DELIVERY

1 - Vocal delivery interferes with entire presentation
2 - Volume, tone, or articulation often hinder understanding
3 - A few disfluencies (e.g., 'uh', 'like')
4 - Clear delivery with minimal disfluencies
5 - Rate, volume, pronunciation, articulation are excellent

PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOR

1 - Presentation weakened by inappropriate dress, language, attitude, or demeanor
2 - Occasional lapses in professionalism noted
3 - Presentation style, delivery, or demeanor mismatched to audience or occasion
4 - Mostly appropriate demeanor; minor issues present
5 - Professional demeanor matches audience and occasion

CONFIDENCE/POISE

1 - Complete lack of control over presentation
2 - Frequent signs of nervousness interfere with message
3 - Nervousness is seen, but poise is attempted
4 - Mostly poised with occasional lapses in confidence
5 - Exudes confidence throughout speech

TIME CONSTRAINTS (BETWEEN 30- 45 MINUTES)

1 - Over/under time limits by >3 minutes
2 - Over/under time limits by 2–3 minutes
3 - Over/under time limits by 2 minutes
4 - Within 1–2 minutes of time limits
5 - Within 1 minute of exact time limits

LANGUAGE

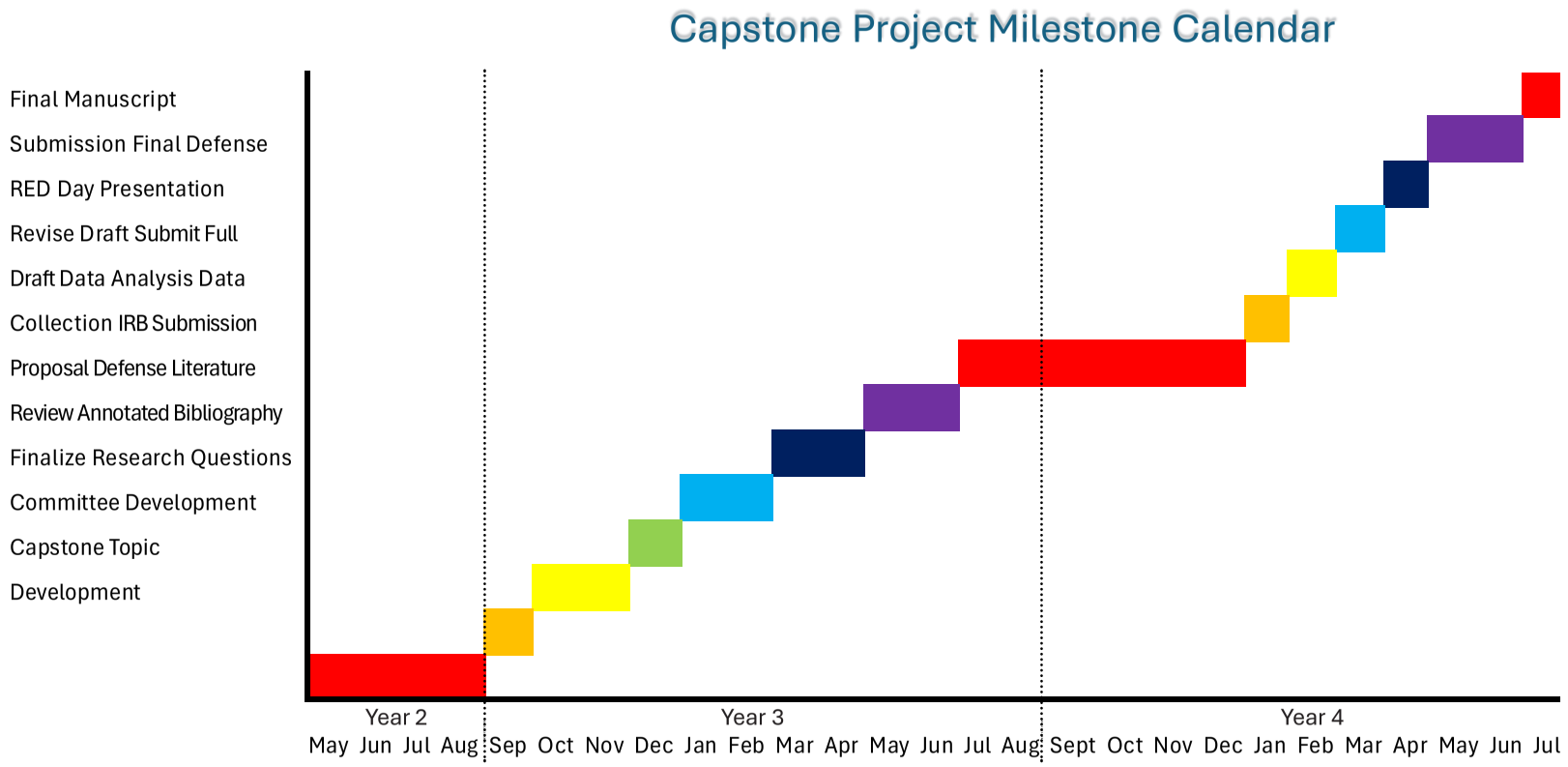
1 - Uses slang or inappropriate language or fails to define new terms
2 - Language occasionally unclear or overly informal
3 - Appropriate for audience, but some parts unclear
4 - Mostly clear and appropriate language for audience
5 - Language is clear, precise, and appropriate for audience

DATA USAGE OF RUBRIC

To support continuous program improvement in accordance with APA Standard V.D, all capstone rubric scores are systematically reviewed each academic year. The Capstone Coordinator is responsible for aggregating evaluation data across rubric domains, identifying trends in student performance, and summarizing these findings in an annual report to the Psychology Program faculty. These reports help inform curricular updates, identify areas for enhanced student support, and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices. Patterns in performance—such as consistently low scores in methodology design or oral defense—may prompt targeted interventions, such as faculty development sessions or revisions to seminar content. This use of capstone data ensures that the program remains responsive to student learning outcomes and maintains alignment with the competencies expected of health service psychologists.

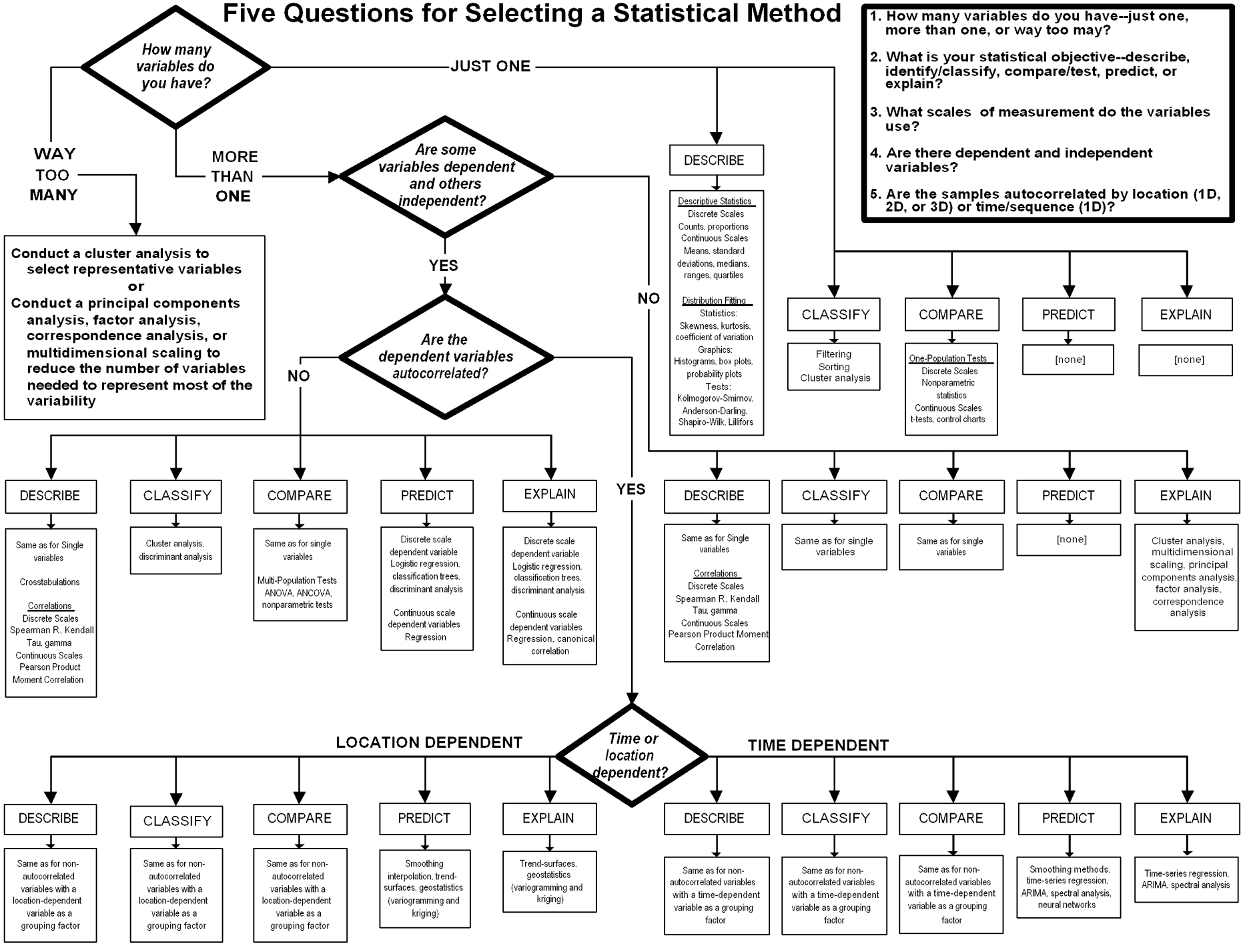
APPENDIX D: CAPSTONE MILESTONE CALENDAR

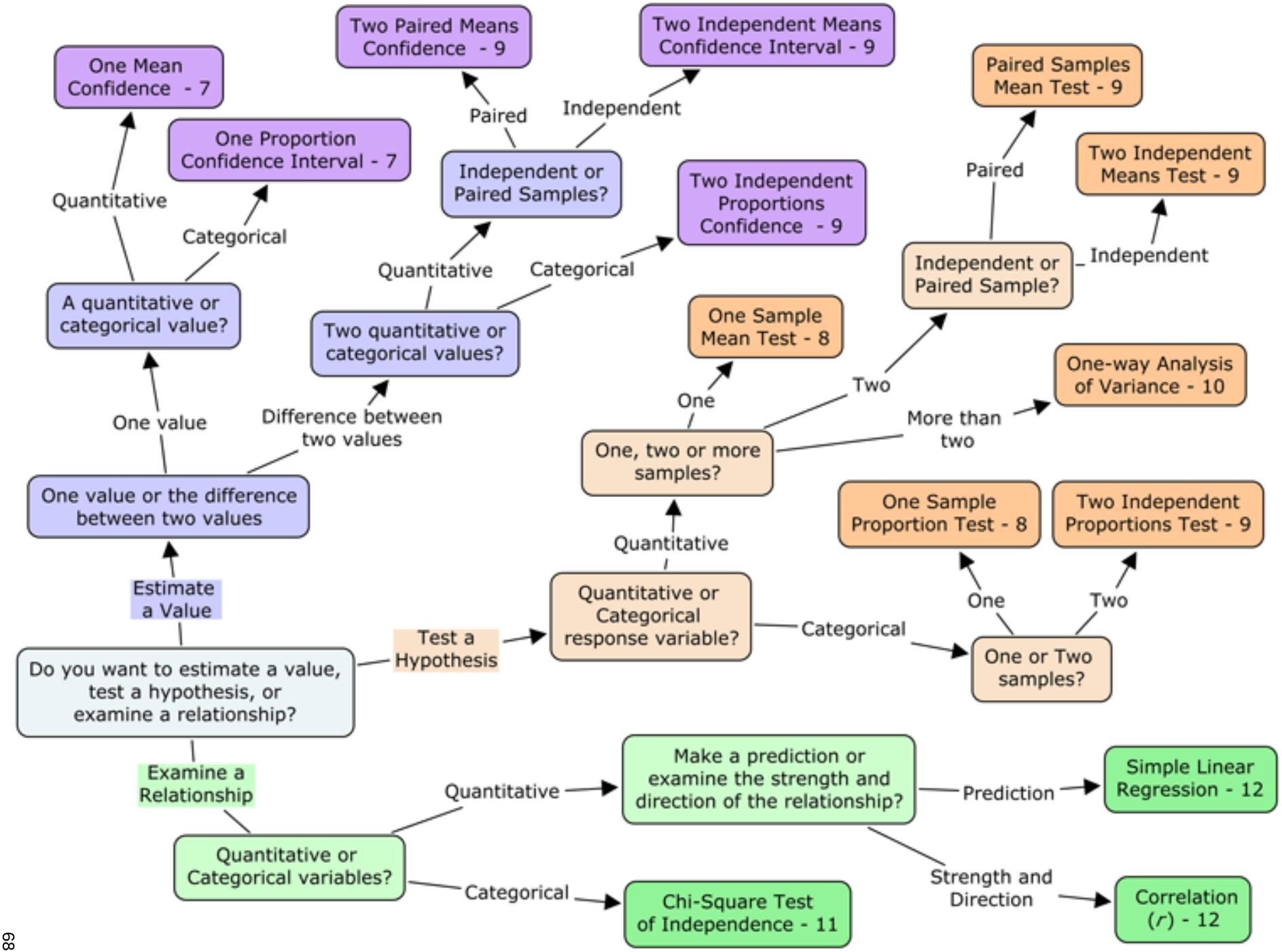
The following visual timeline outlines the typical capstone milestones beginning in the Fall of Year 3 and extending through the Spring of Year 4. Each milestone aligns with major phases of the capstone and internship process.

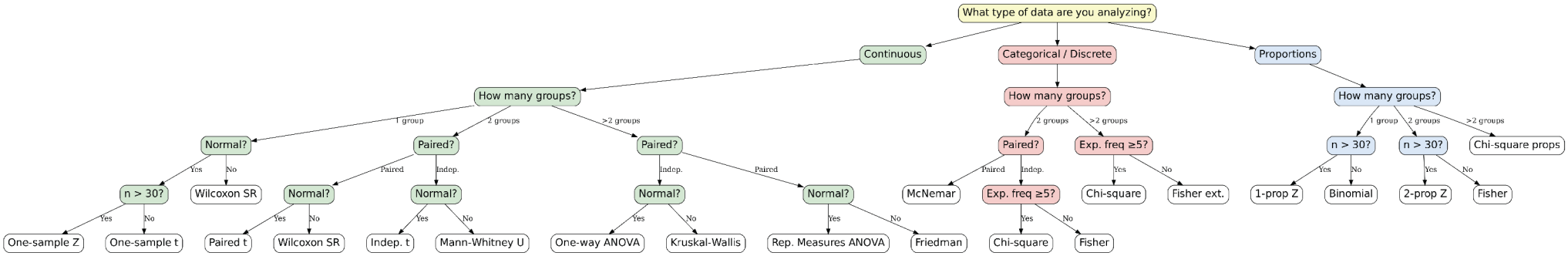


Five Questions for Selecting a Statistical Method

1. How many variables do you have--just one, more than one, or way too may?
2. What is your statistical objective--describe, identify/classify, compare/test, predict, or explain?
3. What scales of measurement do the variables use?
4. Are there dependent and independent variables?
5. Are the samples autocorrelated by location (1D, 2D, or 3D) or time/sequence (1D)?




Do you want to estimate a value, test a hypothesis, or examine a relationship?
Estimate a Value
Test a Hypothesis
Examine a Relationship
One value or the difference between two values
A quantitative or categorical value?
One value
Quantitative
Categorical
One Mean Confidence - 7
One Proportion Confidence Interval - 7
Difference between two values
Two quantitative or categorical values?
Quantitative
Categorical
Independent or Paired Samples?
Paired
Independent
Two Paired Means Confidence - 9
Two Independent Means Confidence Interval - 9
Two Independent Proportions Confidence - 9
Quantitative or Categorical response variable?
Quantitative
One, two or more samples?
One
Two
More than two
One Sample Mean Test - 8
Independent or Paired Sample?
Paired
Independent
Paired Samples Mean Test - 9
Two Independent Means Test - 9
One-way Analysis of Variance - 10
Categorical
One or Two samples?
One
Two
One Sample Proportion Test - 8
Two Independent Proportions Test - 9
Quantitative or Categorical variables?
Quantitative
Categorical
Make a prediction or examine the strength and direction of the relationship?
Prediction
Strength and Direction
Simple Linear Regression - 12
Chi-Square Test of Independence - 11
Correlation (r) - 12



Flow Chart for Selecting Commonly Used Statistical Tests

