

Capstone Research Paper Assignment Guide & Rubric

Cheryl Houston, PhD

Logan University

Capstone Research Paper Assignment Guide & Rubric

The capstone research paper will represent a culmination of your learning in the undergraduate health sciences program. This assignment will provide you with the opportunity to integrate the knowledge and experiences you gained from your course work into a project focusing on an issue within the field of human biology, health or healthcare.

The process for completing the capstone research paper is

- a. select a research topic
- b. develop an annotated bibliography
- c. transform the annotated bibliography into a research paper consisting of three parts
 - i. introduction
 - ii. integrated literature review
 - iii. impact statement

Each of these components is detailed in the following section.

Parts of the Capstone Research Paper

Introduction

The purpose of the introduction is to gain the reader's attention, help the reader understand the problem that needs to be solved, and develop a strong thesis/purpose statement. It's important to include facts and figures (e.g., incidence and prevalence, morbidity and mortality statistics) so the reader can get a clear picture about the scope of the problem you are investigating. A purpose statement is generally one declarative sentence that, according to Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (as cited in Creswell, 2014a, p. 123) "indicates why you want to

do the [research paper] and what you intend to accomplish.” Information about how to develop a strong thesis/purpose statement is covered in the capstone course material. Here is an example:

The purpose of this research paper is to uncover the degree to which self-esteem influences the development of friendships among adolescents. In this paper, self-esteem is defined using the work of Smith and Jones (2005, p. 2) as “confidence in one’s own worth or abilities; self-respect.”

Creating an Integrated Literature Review

Following the introduction, you will synthesize health sciences literature from your annotated bibliography into an integrated literature review (also called a survey of literature or a critical review of literature). You are not limited to the articles you included in your annotated bibliography; feel free to add more peer review primary research articles to support this section of your paper. Organize your literature review like a funnel – start out with broad concepts and work your way down to more specific/focused concepts. It’s useful to include factors influencing the issue you are exploring. You may choose to describe what efforts have been made in the past to improve or solve the issue and what a solution might look like in the future.

Many students fall into a trap when converting the annotated bibliography into a research paper. The trap is describing the articles again, study by study (e.g., Author A said...Author B said...Author C said...). An integrated literature review is different than an annotated bibliography. It’s a synthesis of the research articles you collected and organized using the subheadings in your outline. To synthesize the articles, make connections among the studies. One of the best ways I can suggest you learn how to write an integrated literature review is to read the introduction sections from the articles you included in your annotated bibliography.

Another way is to read review articles. Though you are not allowed to use review articles in your research paper, a review article provides an excellent example of how to write an integrated literature review.

The resources below were selected to help you with the literature review section of the research paper. In addition to these articles, videos and web pages, be sure to use the resources available to you via the Logan Writing Center (LWC).

Pautasso, M. (2013). Ten simple rules for writing a literature review. *PLoS Computational Biology*, 9(7), e1003149. Retrieved from

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3715443/>

Purdue Owl. (2009, February 12). *APA Sample paper*. Retrieved from

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20090212013008_560.pdf

Purdue Owl. (2014, June 10). *The literature review* (Web page). Retrieved from

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/994/04/>

Taylor, D. (2017, March 27). *How to write the literature review in 30 minutes or less* (Video podcast). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdJxY4w9XKY>

Impact Statement

The impact statement should answer two questions: So what? Who cares? The impact statement should also be framed using the socio-ecological model as a guide (refer to the Week 11 Module [content & instructions page] for materials related to this model. To get started, organize your thoughts by describing how your research topic is addressed at each level of the

socio-ecological model (individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy). For example,

Topic: Booster Seat Use for Children Age 2-5

Statement of the Problem: The US has high rates of fatal motor vehicle accidents. Morbidity and mortality among children age 2-5 years of age are on the rise due to inconsistent, improper, or nonexistent use of booster seats when traveling by automobile. The death of a child can have lifelong traumatic psychological/emotional effects on the parents and relatives. Society is also impacted by productive years of life lost when a child dies. Factors impacting compliance with child restraint laws for use of booster seats occurs at all levels of the ecological model.

Individual Level

Parents of children age 2-5 often fail to use booster seats due to their lack of knowledge and poor attitudes and beliefs. Some parents are unaware of the need for a booster seat and prematurely restrain children with an adult seat belt. Some parents report that using a booster seat is "a hassle" - the child doesn't like it and they are hard to install. Others report that the high cost of booster seats prohibits their use.

Interpersonal Level

Parents need to have a united front about the use of booster seats; if one parent does not think they are necessary, the child often goes unprotected. Health care providers (e.g., pediatricians) often do not discuss booster seat use with parents. Grandparents have poor knowledge and attitudes about the use of booster seats, so they often do not use them when caring for their grandchildren age 2-5.

Institutional

While most hospitals will not release a newborn into the care of their parents unless they have an infant car seat for the ride home, there are no such policies for children age 2-5. Insurance companies frequently provide full coverage for the cost of an infant car seat, but not for booster seats.

Community

Most communities do not have injury prevention programs designed to address this problem. Highway signs, billboards, etc. focus on reducing drunk driving, seat belt use by the drivers, and texting while driving instead of booster seat use.

Public Policy

Regulations and laws about booster seat use for children age 2-5 vary by state, are hard to understand, and are rarely enforced.

Now work to develop a narrative that summarizes your thoughts, and be sure to add in your citations. When you review your impact statement, ask yourself, “Does the impact statement I wrote answer the two key questions: So what? Who cares?” If you’re not sure, reach out to the instructor, one of your classmates, or the Writing Center faculty and ask for assistance.

Putting it All Together

Now that you’ve written a solid draft of the capstone research paper, be sure to organize it as follows:

1. Title Page (Remember that the title of the assignment should reflect the scope of the topic, and not simply “Research Paper.”)

2. Text (starting p. 2)

Be sure to use headings and subheadings appropriately. Remember that in APA Style, the introduction does not have a heading. The last section of the paper should be the impact statement and it should have its own heading.

3. References (start on new page)

Reviewing and Editing Your Paper

Before submitting your final paper, examine it using the checklist below and edit your paper accordingly. Remember, this assignment guide is formatted in APA and may serve as a guide.

_____ 1. The title page has all five elements formatted using Times New Roman 12-point font:

a. Running head: TITLE OF PAPER IN ALL CAPS; 50 CHARACTERS MAX

Example:

Running head: THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON FAMILY DYNAMICS

b. Page number is located in the upper right hand corner; start with page 1 – do NOT include your name

c. Title of the Work – use upper-case and lower-case lettering

d. Student's name

e. Institutional Affiliation

_____ 2. The text starts on a separate page, numbered page 2 – do NOT include your name

a. The running head appears on page 2 forward, but doesn't include the phrase "Running head." Continue to use all caps.

Example:

THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON FAMILY DYNAMICS

- b. The title of the assignment appears as a heading (centered, using upper and lower-case lettering)
- c. Indent the first line of each paragraph. For consistency, use the tab key set at five to seven spaces (1/2")
- d. Be sure all text (including the running head, page number and title page) is typed using 1" margins, Times New Roman 12-point font, double spacing, and a left justified margin (see APA Manual for exceptions).
- e. The final paper is 10-15 double-spaced pages, excluding the title page and references, and any tables and figures (if applicable)

3. Citations

Students should attend to proper citation in text. This information is covered at great length in the APA Manual. Quotes must include a locator (e.g., page number for print and pdf documents) or paragraph (for web pages or documents in html format). Be sure that all citations appear on the reference page (exception: personal communication – covered in the References section of this guide.)

Tricky areas

- Personal communication (see APA Manual, p. 179)
- Computer software (see APA Manual, pp. 210-211)
- Web pages
- Photographs (modify format for videos, APA Style Manual, p. 209)

- Legal materials (Appendix 7.1 References to Legal Materials, APA Manual, pp. 216-224).

_____ 4. References (Start the references on a separate page; the heading is not bolded.)

- a. All references are ordered alphabetically by the first author.
- b. All references include the required “Who, When, What, Where” information described above.
- c. All references appear in text as citations.

References follow the same basic format: **Who** (author[s]); **When** (date; typically the year of publication only); **What** (title of the reference; may be the title of a journal article, a book chapter or book title); **Where** (publisher’s location [city, state] and name of the publisher).

For a sample reference page, refer to the APA Manual, Figure 2.1, pp. 49-51.

Tricky areas

- Personal communication (appears as a citation in text, but should not be listed on the reference page.)
- Chapters from a book/textbook (see APA Manual, pp. 202-203; do not include the chapter number in the title of the chapter.)
- Computer software (see APA Manual, p. 211)

Capstone Research Paper Rubric (100 points)

Criteria	Exemplary	Competent	Developing	Minimal	Unacceptable
Completeness: measured by whether or not the student addresses each of the components of the assignment and in doing so, includes sufficient details. This includes the introduction, narrative and impact statement.	Demonstrates completeness by addressing each component of the assignment comprehensively, delivering all relevant information with sufficient detail. [10 points]	One assignment component is missing and/or some of the responses do not include sufficient detail. [8.5 points]	One assignment component is missing and/or all of the responses do not include sufficient detail. [7.5 points]	One assignment component is missing and all of the responses do not include sufficient detail. [3 points]	Did not follow assignment instructions. OR No work submitted. [0 points]
Thesis	The thesis statement is easily identifiable and represents the scope of the paper. [10 points]	The thesis is easily identifiable and promising, but may be slightly unclear or does not fully represent the scope of the paper. [8.5 points]	The thesis is unclear (contains vague language); provides little around which to structure the rest of the response. [7.5 points]	The thesis is difficult to identify. [5 points]	No thesis statement. OR No work submitted.
Comprehension : a measure of understanding	Demonstrates excellent understanding by correctly and frequently using key principles, terminology and concepts related to the topic. [10 points]	Demonstrates good understanding by correctly, but not frequently using key principles, terminology and concepts related to the topic. [8.5 point]	Demonstrates fair understanding by using key principles, terminology and concepts related to the topic, though some are used incorrectly. [7.5 points]	Understanding is minimally evident. Most key principles, terminology and/or concepts related to the topic are used infrequently and often incorrectly. [5 points]	Understanding is not demonstrated. Key points are tangential and unrelated to the topic selected. OR No work submitted.
Critical Thinking: measured by the ability to consider assumptions, make arguments, and consider the complexities of the topic	Demonstrates excellent insight by successfully executing all of the following: (1) examining own and others' assumptions, (2) considering the main point(s) of the argument under discussion, and (3) taking into account the complexities of the topic. [17 points]	Demonstrates good insight by successfully executing two of the following: (1) examining own and others' assumptions, (2) considering the main point of the argument under discussion, and (3) taking into account the complexities of the topic. [17 points]	Demonstrates fair insight by successfully executing one of the following: (1) examining own and others' assumptions, (2) considering the main point(s) of the argument under discussion, and (3) taking into account the complexities of the topic. [15 points]	Insight is minimally evident. Assumptions, argument and complexity are minimally addressed. [5 points],	Insight is not demonstrated. Assumptions, argument and complexity are not addressed. OR No work submitted.

	and (3) taking into account the complexities of the three elements selected by the student to assess about the work. [20 points]				
Evidence and Support	Supporting facts speak to the thesis. Evidence comes directly from high quality primary research. [20 points]			Supporting facts do not speak to the thesis. Evidence appears to be the student’s opinion only and not based on high quality primary research . Some/most of the resources are of poor or questionable quality. [10 points]	No work submitted.
Organization and Flow Organization and flow are assessed by the logical progression of ideas and how well the writer transitions from one point to another in and between paragraphs.	The main points and ideas are presented in an orderly fashion. Excellent use of transitions within and between paragraphs. [10 points]	The main points and ideas are mostly presented in an orderly fashion. Good use of transitions within and between paragraphs. [8.5 points]	The main points and ideas are presented with some significant lapses in order. Fair use of transitions within and between paragraphs. [7.5 points]	The assignment narrative is largely underdeveloped and disorganized. The order is hard to follow. The transitions are lacking to a great extent within and between paragraphs. [5 points]	No work submitted.
College-level Professional Writing This criterion assesses the writing in terms of sentence structure, word choice, style and tone.	The assignment narrative is well written in terms of sentence structure, word choice and style. The student uses a scholarly and professional tone. [10 points]	The assignment narrative is good. There are issues with one of the following areas: (1) sentence structure, (2) word choice, (3) style, or (4) scholarly and professional tone. [8.5 points]	The assignment narrative is fair. There are issues with two of the following areas: (1) sentence structure, (2) word choice, (3) style, or (4) scholarly and professional tone. [7.5 points]	The assignment narrative reads as if it is an early assignment draft. There are issues with three of the following areas: (1) sentence structure, (2) word choice, (3) style, or (4) scholarly and professional tone. [5 points]	Unaccept-able issues with sentence structure and word choice. Style and scholarly/ professional tone are lacking. OR No work submitted.
Conventions	Always uses correct punctuation, grammar and spelling. APA Style is used without error. [10 points]	Frequently uses correct punctuation, grammar and spelling. APA Style is used with errors in one of the five major categories (i.e., title page, running head p. 2+, headings/subheading s, citations,	Frequently uses correct punctuation, grammar and spelling. APA Style is used with errors in two of the five major categories (i.e., title page, running head p. 2+, headings/subheading s, citations,	Occasionally uses correct punctuation, grammar and spelling. APA Style is used with errors in three or more of the five major categories (i.e., title page, running head p. 2+, headings/subheadin	No citations and/or references were used when the student should have done so. OR No work submitted.

		references). [8.5 points]	references). [7.5 points]	gs, citations, references). [5 points]	
--	--	---------------------------	---------------------------	--	--

Total Points: ____/100

References

- American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014a). Designing research. In *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed., pp. 105-153). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014b). The use of theory. In *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed., p. 53). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.