**Directing a WRTC Thesis Capstone (Quick Guide)**

Student’s First Year

**March**

Students will attend mandatory meeting of full first-year cohort to discuss Graduate Capstone Guidelines, procedures for choosing a capstone chair, etc. The Grad Director will help students identify possible advisors based on expertise and equitable workload distribution among faculty.

**March – April**

Immediately following Spring Break, students will contact prospective advisors and arrange to discuss their idea/direction for the project. Please inform students as quickly as possible of your willingness/ability to chair. (***Note:*** Each faculty member should agree to advise only one capstone unless previously agreed upon with the Grad Director.)

**May**

Before the end of the semester, please hold at least one meeting with your advisee to set goals and directions for the advisee’s independent summer work to draft the capstone proposal. You and the student should also identify two additional committee members for the project at this point. For the thesis, both of these members must be graduate faculty, and one must be in WRTC. The student may include a non- graduate faculty member on the committee with approval of The Graduate School (TGS).

After forming the committee, the student must **file a Thesis Committee Approval form** with TGS. (See the Graduate School website under “Graduate Forms” for the “[Committee Approval Form](https://www.jmu.edu/grad/current-students/graduate-forms.shtml)”.

**June – August**

***Note:*** This timeline may need to be accelerated if the student is conducting human subjects research, and therefore needs IRB approval.

The student will work independently on the **thesis proposal**. You can determine the best method for communicating and working with the student on drafts during this period. Requirements for the thesis proposal, proposal approval meeting and thesis defense as well as a sample thesis proposal can be found in the *WRTC Graduate Capstone Advisor Handbook.*

Student’s Second Year

**August**

The student will provide you with a completed draft of the **thesis proposal by the end of the first week of classes**. Once you have provided revision suggestions, the student should ideally submit the proposal to the entire committee by early September.

**September**

The student should become familiar with the TGS Degree Requirements Checklist as well as due dates for submitting their thesis. Find this and additional information at the [Thesis and Dissertation Information](https://www.jmu.edu/grad/current-students/thesis-dissertation/information.shtml) tab: <https://www.jmu.edu/grad/current-students/thesis-dissertation/information.shtml>.

Schedule a **proposal approval meeting** with the student and committee no less than two weeks after you have received the thesis proposal. The proposal approval meeting (~60 minutes in length) provides the committee the opportunity to ask the student questions about the project, provide feedback to the student regarding the project, and offer suggestions/make stipulations for changes. This meeting is meant to be a heuristic for strengthening and clarifying the thesis project. The committee can either vote to accept the proposal as is, accept it with revisions to be sent only to the advisor, or request revisions be sent to the full committee before the student proceeds with their project. If major modifications are required to the project, you can have the student revise the proposal and schedule an additional proposal approval meeting later in the semester.

Please inform the Graduate Director when the student’s proposal has been approved.

**November**

The student should **file the Application for Graduate Degree** with TGS.

After the student has successfully completed their proposal approval meeting, the Graduate Director will see that a section of WRTC 700 is created for the student. Each faculty member should **submit an official syllabus for each section of WRTC 700**: Thesis that you oversee. See the *WRTC Graduate Capstone Advisor Handbook* for a syllabus template.

**January – March**

The capstone chair can determine the best method for communicating and working with the student on thesis drafts during this period, but advisors should meet with students at least twice a month.

**March**

When you feel the student’s thesis is ready to be reviewed and defended, the student should supply the committee with a final draft of the thesis, at least two weeks before the scheduled thesis defense. Thesis defenses should be scheduled not later than early April to allow for sufficient time to meet the thesis posting deadline. As soon as the student and committee have determined a date and time they can meet for the defense, inform the Graduate Director.

**April**At the **thesis defense**, the student will present his/her project to the committee in a closed meeting. If the committee decides the student has passed the defense (with or without revisions), each member of the committee should individually **complete a Thesis Capstone Rubric** (see WRTC Grad website “Forms” tab); the capstone chair should then submit all copies to the Graduate Director.

## If the committee votes to pass the thesis at the committee, **each member will also want to sign**—in black ink—**four copies of the thesis title page** (see *WRTC Graduate Capstone Advisor Handbook*). The student and you will also file a [Copyright/Embargo Form](https://www.jmu.edu/grad/_files/document-agreement.pdf).

The student will submit the approved thesis electronically and in hard copy (with signed cover sheets) to TGS by the Graduate School deadline (mid-April). The documents will need to be formatted in accordance to the [Scholarly Document Manual](https://www.jmu.edu/grad/current-students/thesis-dissertation/2017-18Manual.pdf).

If the student is unable to complete the thesis before the April deadline, please talk to the Graduate Director to discuss steps that need to be taken to have the student complete the work during the summer or the following semester.

**May**

Submit a grade of “S” or “U” for the student’s capstone grade.