The Master of Arts Capstone

A Writer's Guide

A Non-credit Requirement
for the Master of Arts Degree
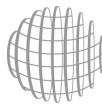
Graduate School of Theology
Global University

The Master of Arts Capstone

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A Non-credit Requirement
for the Master of Arts Degree

Graduate School of Theology
Global University

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Springfield, Missouri USA

The Master of Arts Capstone: A Writer's Guide

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Overview

If you do not plan to write a thesis as part of a Master of Arts (MA) degree plan, you are required to write a capstone paper, in addition to completing the 36 credits required for your chosen MA program. You will need to pay a capstone paper submission fee.

Time Limit

You must successfully complete the Capstone paper before the end of the time limit specified for the complete program. You may submit a completed capstone paper any time after enrollment in the final 6 credits of the program and before the program expiration date.

Writing the Capstone Paper

The MA Capstone Paper Must:

- Be 5,000 to 6,000 words (appx. 20 to 24 pages) long.

- Conform to the format of Global University as presented in the edition of the Global University Graduate Studies Form and Style Guide that is current when you submit your paper. Any exception must be approved by the Dean.

- Demonstrate the REV Principle. Even though the MA Capstone Paper is not a research paper and does not require new research, you must utilize the Reflection, Evaluation, and Valuation (REV) Principle as demonstrated in the course work. This should include citations from previous readings, previous research, and citations from Scripture.

- Be computer generated.

- Be written in English (preferably). A student may arrange with the director of his or her GSO for the paper to be written and evaluated in his or her primary language. An English summary of 250 to 500 words (appx. 1 to 2 pages) should be included if the paper is not written in English.

In the MA Capstone Paper, you will have the opportunity to describe how your MA program impacted your philosophy of ministry. You will also synthesize your learning and your philosophy of ministry with new ideas that will impact your approach to ministry. Concepts learned in your degree program should be discussed, documented, and evident in the paper. New research is not expected or required in the capstone paper and, in fact, should not appear. This paper is your demonstration of learning and growth gained during the process of earning your MA degree.

A typical, well-developed capstone paper will:

1. Briefly (in one paragraph) describe the impact of your MA degree program on your ministry philosophy (100 to 175 words).

2. Identify a problem or an opportunity that exists in your ministry context (250 to 500 words; appx. 1 to 2 pages).

3. Present a solution (problem) or a response (opportunity) that includes (a) biblical and theological reflection and (b) concepts learned in the courses completed for your MA degree (1,000 to 1,250 words; appx. 4 to 5 pages).

4. Describe a strategic plan for implementation of the solution or response. The plan should include (a) goals, (b) timelines for achieving goals, (c) identification of potential challenges, and (d) a framework for meeting

challenges (3,250 to 3,750 words; appx. 13 to 15 pages).

5. Describe a process for evaluating the implemented strategy (250 to 500 words; appx. 1 to 2 pages).

Each area of discussion should tie back to your course work and the REV Principle and be appropriately cited.

Tips for Capstone Success
(from former students)

- Make sure you have the current instructions and required elements for the paper in hand by the beginning of your final year in the program.
- Create a skeletal outline of the paper using the required elements as headings.
- Space out the writing process. Begin fleshing out your sections before you enroll in the final one or two courses of your program, rather than waiting until after you have completed your final course.
- Keep it simple and be yourself. Demonstrate the graduate-level writing skill you have developed throughout your program, but be sure to stay true to your own tone and writing style to avoid producing an overly complicated paper.
- Take a short break. In the final editing stages, get away from your paper for a day or two. Read over your paper with fresh eyes, and you will notice things you didn't see before, which will help you in making revisions.
- Read your paper aloud to help you pick up on nuances, as well as errors, you may miss or overlook when reading silently.
- Ask another person to edit your paper. Having someone other than yourself check your paper for errors and areas that could use revision may be helpful.

Capstone Checklist

Checking off the following steps as you complete them will help keep you on track as you make progress on your Capstone.

- ☐ I have projected a final paper submission date and marked it on my calendar.

- ☐ I begin planning my capstone as soon as I have enrolled in my final course for my MA program.

- ☐ I know who to submit my paper to, and how to submit it.

- ☐ I have my Request for Student Services form and submission fee ready to submit with my paper.

- ☐ I have all of my previous course materials and final assignments available for reference while writing my capstone.

- ☐ I have taken time to review my final assignments and noted the main points of each.

- ☐ I believe my philosophy of ministry is God-given and viable for my life at this time.

- ☐ I believe I have a plan from God for implementing that philosophy of ministry.

- ☐ I have mapped out a basic outline for my paper, including all required components.

Submitting Your Capstone Paper

International Students

Anytime after enrolling in the final credits of your MA program and before the time limit to complete the program expires, submit your completed capstone paper and submission fee to your GSO director.

US Students

A non-credit Capstone Paper course is now available online. When you enroll in the Capstone course, you will pay your paper submission fee. You should submit your completed paper through this online course as well. If you are unable to access the online course, you may submit your paper via email to gst@globaluniversity.edu.

Processing Your Capstone Paper

- **Evaluating the capstone paper.** An approved mentor will be selected to evaluate your paper according to criteria established by the Graduate School of Theology. *(See the sample evaluation criteria form on page 7.)* Your paper will be evaluated based on the quality of reflection and on your ability to integrate into the capstone paper what you have learned in the graduate-level courses for your program. The mentor who is selected to evaluate your capstone paper should be a content specialist for your degree specialty.

- **Evaluating and approving the capstone paper.** Your marked paper and evaluation form should be returned to the Dean of the Graduate School of Theology no later than the fifteenth business day after you submit the completed paper and fee. The Dean reserves the

right to give final approval of the grade assigned to the
paper.

- **Notifying the student of approval of the capstone
  paper.** Global University will notify you of the
  assessment outcome of your capstone paper, either pass
  or fail. In the event the paper does not meet acceptable
  assessment standards for approval, you will be allowed
  to rewrite and resubmit the paper.

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY
1211 South Glenstone Avenue
Springfield, Missouri 65804, USA

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
MASTER OF ARTS MA CAPSTONE PAPER EVALUATION
Phone: 1-800-443-1083 (USA); 417-862-9533 (Outside USA)
E-mail: gst@globaluniversity.edu

Student no._____ Student name_____

Date submitted_____ GSG office code_____ Evaluator faculty no._____

Graduate program for which capstone paper is submitted:
____ Master of Arts in Biblical Studies (Broad Field)   ____ Master of Arts in Ministerial Studies (Education)
____ Master of Arts in Biblical Studies (New Testament)   ____ Master of Arts in Ministerial Studies (Leadership)
____ Master of Arts in Ministerial Studies (Broad Field)   ____ Master of Arts in Ministerial Studies (Intercultural
Studies Concentration)

Evaluation criteria should be assessed by assigning point values that best reflect the subjective observation of the evaluator. All sub-points for each criterion should be considered as a whole to determine a point value for that criterion. Point values are based on the following levels of competency:

10 points   (100%) = excellent level of competency displayed
9 points   (90%) = above average level of competency displayed
8 points   (80%) = average level of competency displayed
7 points   (70%) = poor level of competency displayed
0-6 points   (0-60%) = unacceptable level of competency displayed

Evaluation Criteria	**Point Value**
1. Is the ministry philosophy overview stated clearly and concisely?	____
2. Does the ministry experience include new ideas that have impacted the student's approach to ministry?	____
3. Does the student identify a problem or an opportunity that exists within his or her ministry context?	____
4. Does the presentation of a solution (problem) or a response (opportunity) include:	____
a) Biblical and theological reflection	
b) Concepts learned in the courses completed for the respective MA degree	
5. Does the strategic plan for implementation of the solution or response include:	____
a) Goals	
b) Timelines for achieving goals	
c) Identification of potential challenges	
d) A framework for meeting challenges	
6. Is the process for evaluating the implemented strategy adequately described?	____
7. Is application of course content for specified degree evident throughout the paper?	____
8. Are relevant references included for course materials and other sources?	____
9. Writing style	____
a) Is the writing style appropriate for the paper?	
b) Is the writing style concise?	
c) Are all components of the paper clearly and logically organized?	
10. Format	____
a) Are all applicable components of the capstone paper (e.g., title page, ministry experience, appendices, tables, and figures) done according to the *Global University Form and Style Guide*?	
b) Are quotations and source references cited according to the *Global University Form and Style Guide*?	

Capstone paper evaluation (total score for all categories)   ____

Comments:_____

_____   _____
Evaluator signature   Date (daMONyr; as: 16JAN15)

_____   _____   ____ Pass   ____ Fail
Dean's signature   Date (daMONyr; as: 16JAN15)

Samples of Capstone Components

The samples on the following pages are excerpts of actual student papers, and are provided to give you an idea of how to put together the required components of your capstone. While these examples serve as general guidelines, remember to stay true to your own tone and style to produce an original work.

Please note that these samples are meant to show exmples of content, not form and style. You should be careful to adhere to the edition of the *GU Graduate Studies Form and Style Guide* most current when writing your paper.

The samples include:

Sample 1: Table of Contents Example

Sample 2: Philosophy of Ministry Example 1

Sample 3: Philosophy of Ministry Example 2

Sample 4: Implementation Strategy Example

Sample 5: Evaluation of Implementation Strategy Example

Sample 6: Reference List Example

Sample 1: Table of Contents Example

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Sample 2: Philosophy of Ministry Example 1

EQUIP: PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY AND STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

It is critical that this Master's Degree in Biblical Studies does not simply result in an academic certificate, but leads directly to a programme of implementation for ministry. Therefore, this capstone paper will focus on developing a five-year strategy and plan, to implement much of what I have learnt from the Master's degree studies in Hermeneutics, New Testament Studies, Koine Greek, Lucan Pneumatology, and Christian Leadership. Section one will provide an overview of my philosophy of ministry. Section two will provide the vision, mission, strategy, and five-year implementation plan for the new teaching programme of *EQUIP*. Section three will explain how the effectiveness of this strategy for *EQUIP* will be evaluated through ongoing feedback.

Philosophy of Ministry

Calling of God for Ministry

As a result of the Christian Leadership courses, I have learnt that the key principles of one's philosophy of ministry are: one's calling, gifting, burden, purpose, principles, values and approach (Klaus 2005, 26; Lee 2001, 15-20; Maxwell 2008, location 452; Niles 2003, 44; Prime and Begg 2004, 19). As Elliston (1992) explains, one's calling ultimately is from the Lord and through this, "the Holy Spirit plays the key role in the development of leaders" (95). I have sensed the Lord's calling over the past twenty years, to two areas of leadership ministry. Both have been part of what has become the primary aim of my life, to serve the Lord for transformation, of lives, of the church, of communities, and where possible, within society.

The first calling has been to development work, to develop and manage projects that serve the greatest needs of people living in poverty in developing countries, especially focussing on the needs of orphaned children. Over the past twenty years, this led to a change

Sample 3: Philosophy of Ministry Example 2

Student Name, Student ID

Philosophy of Ministry

Mission

  God's mission to reconcile humankind to Himself through His Son encompasses the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. His plan for reconciliation includes calling His Church to partner in the task of bringing the nations to faith in Jesus Christ. In particular, He positions members of the Body of Christ by calling and empowering them to participate in His mission throughout the world.

  The aim of missions is to establish ministry according to the indigenous principle. That is, based on the New Testament example of the Early Church, indigenous ministry should be self-governed, self-propagating, and self-supported (Hodges 1976, 12). In addition, indigenous ministry should also be self-theologizing (Bosch 2011, 462) and self-missionizing (Shibley 2001, 163).

  Partnering in God's mission according to these indigenous principles assumes that the Holy Spirit not only saves people but can also guide, empower, and direct them to be a viable church within any cultural context. Rather than making the people of God dependent upon a missionary, the people are taught to depend upon God to do the work of the ministry within their own cultural surroundings. They are encouraged to seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit, not for the sake of experience, but to be empowered to carry out the Church's God-given mission of communicating the gospel with culturally relevant ministry throughout the world (Luke 24: 49; Acts 1:8).

  Partnering with God's mission also requires developing a ministry strategy founded on biblical principles. To obey Jesus' command to take the gospel to all people means that those who answer God's call to full-time service as cross-cultural missionaries

Student Name, Student ID   Capstone Paper

must develop a strategy to carry out His command. Rather than develop short-term

tactics, a missionary should develop a long-term strategy, "an overall approach, plan, or

way of describing how (he) will go about reaching (the) goal" (Dayton and Fraser 1980,

16). Developing a strategy forces the missionary to pursue God's desire and then to align

himself or herself with that divine desire. This pursuit requires making a statement of

faith about God's desire for the unseen future and, in hope, plan what should be done in

partnership with God to bring it to fruition.

The Joshua Project, a mission research initiative, defines an unreached people

group as a group among which the indigenous Christian community has less than 2%

evangelical Christians. By this definition, the Japanese people are the second largest

unreached people group in the world (Joshua Project, under "Unreached Listings"). With

a population of more than 127 million, less than 1% of the Japanese are Evangelical

Christians. Although the Christian message has been introduced in Japan, because of the

long history of Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism combined with an atheistic,

post-World War II worldview serving as the foundation of Japanese society and identity,

there is a resistance to anything, including Christianity, that might be considered a threat

to the Japanese worldview and national identity.

Nonetheless, Japan is a nation where education is highly valued. Ranked third in

the top ten most educated countries, more than 40% of its citizens have higher education

degrees (Grossman 2012, http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/09/27 /and-the-worlds-most-

educated-country-is/). Japanese youth between the ages of 18 – 23 are the most open to

the gospel message (Madryk 2010, http://www.operationworld.org/japa). During their

collegiate years, young people are more likely to explore the meaning of life as they

begin to make major life decisions concerning careers, relationships, and the future. This quest for knowledge and meaning in life indubitably creates openness to learning new ideas and meeting new people. Thus, reaching young adult university students is recognized as an important strategy for reaching Japan. Moreover, there is great potential for introducing university students to Christianity who, in turn, will become the future leaders of their nation after they graduate and enter the marketplace.

Vision

As a ministry branch of the National Youth Department of the Japan Assemblies of God, Chi Alpha Japan's vision is to reconcile students to Christ by creating Christ-centered community among university students on campus, and thereby transform the university, families, the marketplace, and the world. The community on campus endeavors to express itself in *prayer* to God, *worship* to God, *fellowship* with one another, *mission* to the lost, and *discipleship* at every level of relationship in the community (Herman 1991, 1.3). These values of prayer, worship, fellowship, mission, and discipleship are New Testament principles incorporated in the Early Church (Acts 2:42-47), transgenerational, and applicable in any cultural context.

In a Christ-centered community, people follow Jesus' command to love God and others and thus treat one another with love and respect because they are made in the image of God (Matt. 22:37-49; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27). Interestingly, community is highly valued in Japanese society. According to Noriyuki Miyake in his book *Belong, Experience, Believe: Pentecostal Mission Strategies for Japan*, Japanese society essentially forces Japanese people to belong to a community and thus find identity from the community (Miyake 2011, under "Japanese Social Mentality"). However, Japanese

Sample 4: Implementation Strategy Example

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materials will be translated into Shona to provide for most believers' preferred language of

communication.

    By relating directly to the local cultural environment. I have learnt from the previous

course in Bible as Literature how Christ and many of the Bible's teachers, used symbolic

language including metaphors, allegories, and similes, from people's everyday environment, to

explain abstract explain spiritual concepts (Ryken 1984, 26-29). In learning from these master

teachers, my approach will be to develop teaching courses and materials using everyday local

examples in Zimbabwe to explain biblical principles. To provide local analogies which

explain, for example, the parable of the Good Samaritan in a local context as the parable of

'the good combi driver'. To translate Paul's exhortation for unity between Jews and Gentiles

into the local context of addressing the racial tensions here between Shona, Ndebele and white

Zimbabwean believers.

Strategy for Implementation of EQUIP

    The following section outlines the five-year strategy and implementation plan for my

new ministry programme of *EQUIP*. The Master's courses in Christian Leadership and

Dynamics of Christian Organisations, have contributed to the development of this ministry's

vision, mission, goals, approach and strategy (Hybels 2004, 97; Klaus and Heuser 2004, 101-

119, Lee 2001, 115-126; Maxwell 2008, location 5083; Niles 2003, 54; Shawchuck and

Heuser 1996, 107-111; Steen 2014, 1; Wilkes 1998, 221-223). These are as follows:

Mission of EQUIP

    EQUIP is a teaching and training ministry to facilitate the growth and spiritual

development of cell groups. Training to equip cell leaders with the knowledge of God's Word,

and skills to effectively lead and teach their weekly cell groups. Teaching through the

provision of Bible Study resources to cell groups, in order to facilitate greater in-depth

learning of God's Word within the local context, directed to greater application for believers'

Student Name, Student ID number

everyday lives.

Vision of EQUIP

A future where every cell group leader in the body of Christ is fully trained to teach and lead their cell groups of believers. In which every cell leader is fully equipped with the resources needed to successfully lead interactive Bible studies that transform believers' lives. A future where as a result, cell group communities will successfully build up believers to maturity in their faith and the full knowledge of God's Word, within an environment of loving supportive fellowship. A future where as a result, believers are fully equipped in ministry to build maturity in the church, and are effective witnesses for Christ in the world.

Target Group of Equip

The primary target group of *EQUIP* will be cell group leaders for the provision of training. The wider target group will be cell groups for the provision of interactive Bible study resources (in the form of weekly home groups, men's groups, women's groups or youth groups). The overall impact group of *EQUIP* will be the local churches, through whom this training will build their congregations to maturity.

Problem Addressed and Rationale

The problem addressed by *EQUIP* is the widespread lack of training for cell group leaders, and the lack of locally based, interactive, bible study resources for cell groups to use (Elliston 1992, 33-34). Cell group leaders are rarely trained in the necessary skills to: (a) interpret scripture accurately, (b) conduct interactive small group teaching, (c) provide pastoral care, and (d) develop group fellowship and community. Most Bible Colleges that teach these skills and biblical knowledge remain inaccessible due to their fees, duration, and academic ability required.

The majority of Bible study resources available tend to suffer from (i) a lack of in-depth interpretation of scripture, (ii) an absence of methods to promote interactive learning,

(iii) failure to contextualise scripture into the local culture and environment, and (iv) failure to provide accompanying hands-on training for teaching these resources and leading cell groups. As a result, instead of being the engine for spiritual growth and transformation, these cell group Bible studies often fail to establish the necessary knowledge and local application of God's Word in believers' lives. Tragically, this results in churches where believers remain immature in their faith, failing to be an effective witness for Christ in the world, easily led astray by false teaching and beliefs.

Yet cell groups when equipped with trained leaders and effective resources, are the most effective environment for the study of God's Word and spiritual growth. Time and again the impact of cell groups for transforming believers' lives has been demonstrated, whether recently in the world's largest church, the Yoido Full Gospel church in South Korea (Prior1983, 26), or historically in John Wesley's pioneering Methodist 'classes' and 'bands' during the 18th century (Prior 1983, 39). "Virtually every major movement of spiritual renewal in the Christian church has been accompanied by a return to the small group and the proliferation of such groups in private homes for Bible study, prayer, and discussion of the faith" (Cox 1998, 16). The role of these cell leaders are "critically important to the health and growth of the church", who through small group ministry "carry the primary responsibilities for shepherding and instructing the majority of the members of the church" (Elliston 1992, 29). When fully trained and equipped for ministry these cell leaders can have the greatest impact upon believers' growth and transformation.

Overall Purpose of EQUIP

The overall Purpose of the ministry of *EQUIP* is to build the church, and every believer to: (i) a solid understanding of God's Word, (ii) maturity in their faith and living, (iii) integration into God's community, (iv) being equipped for ministry, and (v) effective witness for Christ in the world. Through developing cell leaders and their groups, *EQUIP* aims to

Sample 5: Evaluation of Implementation Strategy Example

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Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Strategy

The effectiveness of implementing the strategy of developing a Chi Alpha campus ministry will be evaluated annually over a course of five years. At the end of the first year, the effectiveness of training the Chi Alpha Japan team will be evaluated by asking each team member, including the mentors, to do a self-evaluation of godly character, pastoral heart, vision, kingdom awareness, and ministry skills. Also, based on the required reading of Steven Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, each team member will report on his or her overall progress in developing two selected habits.

In addition to the monthly reports of the students with whom they regularly meet personally and discuss how to care for each student's relational and spiritual growth, at the end of each school year, the team will make recommendations for student leaders. Those recommended for student leadership will be asked to serve as student representatives for their Chi Alpha chapter. Student participation in Chi Alpha Japan typically experiences student turnover every year largely due to graduation. Thus, this evaluation process will continue each year so that there will be ministry continuation.

Additionally, at the end of the first academic year, the team evaluate the overall community of students at Tokyo universities by rating the quality of each of its five values on a scale of one to five (one meaning poor and five meaning excellent) and then ask the following questions:

1. In the past year, which value was strongest? Who or what contributed to that strength?

2. In the past year, which value was weakest? How can that weakness be improved?

Student Name, Student ID   Capstone Paper

3. How can the other values be improved?

4. Which campuses have more student participation, and which campuses have

    little student participation?

After the completion of the second year, the team members and the student

leaders will evaluate Chi Alpha Japan using the above evaluation method. Based on the

results, they will discuss how to better express the community values on campuses with

students.

The effectiveness of partnering with Chi Alpha U.S.A. teams and summer interns

will be evaluated in debriefings with teams and with summer interns. The following

questions will be asked:

1. What was a personal highlight during the summer?

2. What was a personal challenge this summer?

3. What suggestions do you have for improving the ministry experience?

Interns who demonstrate spiritual and leadership growth will be asked to consider

returning to Japan after graduation to serve as short-term or career missionaries.

Participants in the national Chi Alpha campus ministry training seminar will

evaluate the seminar by filling out an open-ended questionnaire. The questions will

include:

1. How did you hear about the Chi Alpha campus ministry training seminar?

2. Are you involved in ministry at your church? If so, what is your role?

3. Rating each of the five sessions on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest and 5

    being the highest), how satisfied were you of the content, the speaker, and the

    format?

4. Do you have any suggestions for improving the seminar? If so, what are they?

5. After attending this seminar, would you like to be become involved in campus

    ministry? If so, would you please write your contact information so that we

    can contact you?

After compiling and reviewing these annual evaluations, adjustments will be

implemented each year to make the strategy more effective for forming Christ-centered

communities among students at Japanese universities in Tokyo.

Sample 6: Reference List Example

                                                              24
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