

Description of Capstone AY2019/2020 – ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Identification of project and supervisor

Capstone projects in Environmental Studies are an important component of a student's area of specialization, and hence must be consistent with and build upon the student's previously approved area-of-specialization statement. Students are encouraged to begin conceptualising their projects as early as Semester Two of their junior year. Prior to the end of Year Three, students will submit a preliminary indication of their capstone project and their preferred supervisors to the ES Head of Studies (HoS). The HoS will assign first readers (i.e. the primary capstone supervisor) no later than 1 July, and students will complete a handful of project-focusing exercises facilitated by the capstone-module coordinator (CMC) during the summer preceding their fourth year of study. The first reader will usually be a faculty member associated with the Environmental Studies programme. The HoS, working with the CMC, will assign second readers by the fourth week of the first semester of Year Four. Both readers will participate in a student defense of the research proposal to be scheduled mid-semester in Semester One of Year Four.

Range of topics and formats

EStudies capstones may take two general forms. One is a major research project that addresses a central question within the student's area of specialization. Another is an applied or creative project (e.g. documentary, performance, literary piece, visual arts) with a significant academic component that tests or illuminates an important hypothesis or question that, again, builds upon the student's area of specialisation. Final capstone documents in the first category will typically approach 10,000 words. For capstones in the second category, the research document will be necessarily shorter, as determined by the first and second readers in consultation with the student, the CMC, and the HoS. Students should refer to additional instructions on format and topics as provided by the HoS and the CMC.

Activities as part of the project

Students complete the following tasks as part of their project: (i) they write and present a research proposal (with a clear statement of the research question, a literature review, and a discussion of methodology) to their first and second reader by the end of week six of Semester One; (ii) they complete and submit at least one chapter or major section of their project by the end of Semester One; (iii) they submit a complete draft of the project by the deadline set by the programme and meet with their first reader to discuss detailed feedback on the draft prior to submitting the final project; (iv) they submit their final capstone project by the deadline set by the programme and defend it in an oral exam with their first and second readers during week eleven and twelve of Semester Two; (v) they attend a weekly seminar on research in the field during Semester One, and meet regularly with their primary supervisor throughout the project; and (vi) they participate, on a voluntary basis, in a public presentation of capstone work at the end of Semester Two.

Preparation of students

There will be a series of research consultations with Yale-NUS or NUS librarians, as determined by the CMC and the first reader. Students will also complete a series of exercises facilitated by the CMC meant to focus their research approach during the summer prior to Year 4. Students should contact their first reader as soon as possible after advising assignments are finalized.

Expectations for students/supervisor interactions and work on the project

Students should schedule regular conferences with their supervisors to discuss progress, challenges, and other matters related to the capstone project. These conferences are most helpful when students provide their supervisor with a summary of current progress on the project at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Format(s) of final product

The final product for a major research project will be an academic paper (~10,000 words) or multiple-chapter document in a format common to the field. The CMC will distribute specific formatting guidelines during Semester Two. The final product for an applied/creative project will be an academic paper, described above, and the applied or creative work.

Assessment(s)

Participation in the research seminar during Semesters One and Two (15%), proposal inclusive of literature review and methodology submitted by end of week six of Semester One (10%), and quality of final paper/project and oral defense of project (75%).