



The University of Texas at Austin
School of Information

Capstone Handbook

Master of Science in Information Studies (MSIS)

School of Information – The University of Texas at Austin

1616 Guadalupe, Suite #5.202, Austin, Texas 78701 | 512-471-3821

info@ischool.utexas.edu | www.ischool.utexas.edu

Capstone Director: john.neumann@austin.utexas.edu

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Introduction

Congratulations on nearing the completion of your studies as a master's student! Your capstone project will be a culminating experience that synthesizes a variety of skills, knowledge, and expertise that you have gained throughout the course of your studies while also demonstrating that you can lead an independent project.

This handbook contains information on requirements, timing, forms, and the like for master's degree students as you prepare for and complete your required capstone experience in any of four options: (1) professional experience and project, (2) master's report, (3) master's thesis, or (4) school library practicum.

For students opting to take the professional experience and project or school library practicum, this information complements, not replaces, additional requirements and instructions in your instructor's INF 388L/ INF 388R course syllabus. All forms contained in this manual are also available on the school's website to allow for easy printing or digital sending. You will also find other resources on the website, including an archive of previous capstone poster session abstracts.

► <https://ischool.utexas.edu/programs/msis/capstone>

Note: Every effort was made to ensure that the information contained in this updated edition of the Capstone Handbook is accurate as of the date listed on the cover page. However, The University of Texas at Austin is a highly complex and dynamic institution, and some of the information may become out of date. Therefore, we highly recommend that students consult their INF 388L/ INF 388R course instructor for guidance while completing their capstone project.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for assistance.

Soo Young Rieh | Professor and Sr. Associate Dean for Education
rieh@ischool.utexas.edu
Office: UTA 5.328

Amelia Acker | Professor and Graduate Advisor
aacker@ischool.utexas.edu
Office: UTA 5.434

Carla Criner | Assistant Dean for Education and Student Affairs
criner@ischool.utexas.edu
Office: UTA 5.308

John Neumann | Director of Capstones for the School of Information
john.neumann@austin.utexas.edu
Office: UTA 5.410

Overview

As a School of Information MSIS student, you must complete a "capping" experience ("capstone") to your academic studies. Your capstone enables you to culminate your professional education by integrating it with the intellectual and institutional vocations toward which you are striving. This culminating experience is meant to synthesize a variety of skills, knowledge, and expertise while showing that you can design and complete an independent piece of work. As such, the capstone should fit meaningfully into your education, providing a springboard to your future career.

Capstone vs. Independent Study / Internships

A capstone differs from an independent study or an internship in several important ways. An independent study is a course that you arrange to take with a particular professor of your choice (and with the professor's agreement) to explore a topic of interest to you. You may take an independent study at any point in your degree program, unlike the capstone, which you take in your final semester. An independent study need not serve as a culminating experience in the way that the capstone does, but like the capstone it is typically a deepening experience that allows you to devote an entire semester to a single, often narrow, topic.

Although internships vary greatly, most are arrangements that you make with a professor and an external person (often in an organization or institution) to complete a particular project outside the normal iSchool curriculum. Often, organizations have formal internships in which they cycle interns across departments so that the students can learn about the organization and its work. That kind of internship is not at all like a capstone because a capstone requires that a student design and complete a particular piece of work, not simply "get to know" an organization. Also, like an independent study, an internship need not be a culminating experience in the same way that a capstone is, and thus you may do an internship at any point in your degree program.

In sum, work that you have in mind for a capstone almost always would work instead as an internship or an independent study, but work that you line up for internships or independent studies may not qualify as capstones. In any event, the capstone work that you design must be completed with the capstone course number (not an independent study or internship course number) in your final semester, and you must have at least 27 completed units prior to undertaking it.

Capstone Options

You may complete your capstone under one of four options, which we describe briefly here and later in this manual in more detail. Don't wait until the last minute to select an option or to arrange for a supervisor and a project or topic. Instead, talk to your advisor, our Career Development Director, professors with whom you have had classes, fellow students, and working people in your field to determine which option is best for you.

If you are graduating under a Graduate Catalog prior to 2019, you will also be required to enroll in and complete the INF 181E Electronic Portfolio course. In addition, students under all options must attend INF 388L class sessions as specified in the syllabus of that class, even if you are registered under the course number of the other options.

1. Professional Experience and Project “PEP” (INF 388L)

In a single semester, you will complete a fieldwork-based project under the primary guidance of a field supervisor from the organization sponsoring your project. You also will attend class sessions as specified in the syllabus of the INF 388L section for which you sign up. The course instructor will provide additional guidance for all students in the class.

2. Master’s Report (INF 398R)

Working with the guidance of a faculty advisor and a second faculty reader, you will write a publishable-quality paper on a topic of your choice in a single semester. You also will attend, but should not register for, INF 388L class sessions as specified in the syllabus of that class.

3. Master’s Thesis (INF 698A | INF 698B)

Working with the guidance of a faculty advisor and a second faculty reader, you will write a publishable-quality paper based on your original research on a topic of your choice across two semesters. You also will attend, but should not register for, INF 388L class sessions as specified in the syllabus of that class.

4. School Library Practicum (INF 388R)

The school library practicum is required for those students seeking the Standard School Librarian Certification in the State of Texas. Under the school library practicum option, you will be assigned to school libraries and work under the supervision of school librarians for a total of 160 clock hours. You also will attend, but should not register for, INF 388L class sessions as specified in the syllabus of that class. A school library practicum involves a good deal of orientation to school libraries as you first become familiar with people, roles, and resources before carrying out everyday tasks, preparing resources and materials, and providing skills instruction.

Timing in Your Course of Study

You should undertake and complete your capstone in your final semester. Specifically, for the PEP option, the master’s report, and the school library practicum, students seeking master’s degrees from the iSchool must have completed 27 hours of coursework AND be entering their final semester before completing their capstones. If you choose to do a master’s thesis, you will begin in your penultimate semester, and if required, can enroll in INF 181E in either of your two thesis semesters. Students who enter with master’s degrees and are completing only a Certificate of Advanced Study in School Librarianship may complete the Practicum in School Libraries (INF 388R) as negotiated with their individual advisor.

Approval

The process of planning and getting approval for your capstone takes considerable time, effort, planning, coordination, and securing of signatures:

- ▶ **PEP and School Library Practicum:** Require the signatures of the field supervisor and the approval of the course instructor for INF 388L/INF 388R.
- ▶ **Master's Report and Master's Thesis:** Require the signatures of the supervising faculty member, the second faculty reader, and the graduate advisor.

Registration

Follow the registration procedures in Table 1 to ensure you have adequate time to prepare your proposal, secure field supervisor's or faculty supervisor's signatures, and have your proposal approved by the INF 388L/INF 388R course instructor or the graduate advisor.

Table 1. Registration Timing/Deadlines and Actions for Each Capstone Option

Option	Timing / Deadline	Action
PEP	Your penultimate semester.	▶ Contact organizations to discuss potential projects.
	During pre-registration and/or registration before your final semester begins.	▶ Enroll in the e-portfolio course INF 181E, if under pre-2019 Graduate Catalog. ▶ Enroll in INF 388L.
	No later than the last class day of the semester preceding the capstone course.	▶ Submit your completed proposal (signed by you) and letter of agreement (signed by you and your field supervisor) to the INF 388L instructor for the section in which you enrolled for next semester.
Master's Report	During pre-registration and/or registration before the semester begins.	▶ Enroll in the e-portfolio course. ▶ Identify a faculty supervisor and a second faculty reader. ▶ Register for INF 398R with Course Administrator Aaron Ulmer.
	No later than the last class day of the semester preceding the capstone course.	▶ Complete and gather signatures for the iSchool Master's Report Proposal Form, then submit to Course Administrator Aaron Ulmer. ▶ Download and complete required forms from the Office of Graduate Studies; ensure that your document meets all format requirements of the Graduate School.

Master's Thesis	During pre-registration and/or registration before the semester begins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enroll in the e-portfolio course INF 181E, if under a pre-2019 Graduate Catalog. ▶ Identify a faculty supervisor and a second faculty reader.
	No later than the last class day of the semester preceding the capstone course for items related to INF 698B; one semester earlier for items related to INF 698A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Register for INF 698A (Thesis Reading) before course INF 698B (Thesis Writing); register for INF 698B the semester you intend to graduate. You may not repeat 698A for credit. You must take both 698A and 698B on a credit/no credit basis. Register for each course with Course Administrator Aaron Ulmer. ▶ Complete and gather signatures for the iSchool Master's Thesis Proposal Form, then submit to Course Administrator Aaron Ulmer. ▶ Download and complete required forms from the Office of Graduate Studies; ensure that your document meets all format requirements of the Graduate School.
School Library Practicum	During pre-registration and/or registration before the semester begins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enroll in the e-portfolio course INF 181E. ▶ Enroll in INF 388R.
	No later than the last class day of the semester preceding the capstone course. (See footnote).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Submit your completed proposal to Assistant Dean Carla Criner.

Table 2 provides examples of submission dates for registration as outlined in Table 1. The deadline for submitting proposals allows one month between your submission and the beginning of class. That month gives instructors enough time to review your proposal and, if necessary, ask you to revise it. Your instructor will ask you to shorten or expand your project scope if the workload seems inappropriate.

If your instructor is unwilling to approve your proposal by the first day of class, you may be barred from taking the course. Therefore, you should work quickly and diligently to address any concerns the instructor may have, bearing in mind that the instructor holds the final authority on whether your proposal is acceptable or not.

- ▶ **Note:** When submitting a proposal for fall, the deadline is the last class day the nine-week summer semester.

Table 2. Proposal submission dates for AY 2023-2024.

	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
Last class day of preceding semester			
First class day of capstone semester			

Professional Experience and Project (PEP) – INF 388L

For the PEP capstone option, you will apply the knowledge you gleaned from your coursework to a real-world problem in a real-world setting.

Time Investment

We expect you to spend approximately 125 hours on the project (spread evenly across the weeks in the semester) conducting some piece of professional work above and beyond whatever obligations you might already have at the organization. Although you may take advantage of previous work done for the sponsoring organization, and you may continue working on additional elements of the project after the course formally ends, you must structure your PEP such that it does not require more than 125 hours of work and finishes by the last day of class.

Your Role and Ours

The iSchool strives to achieve as much consistency as possible across the sections of the PEP course. Your instructor will serve as a facilitator and an advisor to help you carry out this “industrial-strength” piece of work. Your project involves not only learning, but also doing; you will have true ownership of it.

Your instructor will contact your field supervisor at the beginning of the semester to initiate a channel of communication and to invite feedback at any point in the semester. The primary responsibility, though, for maintaining good communication with your field supervisor and resolving any issues that come up lies with you. Your instructor is available to offer you advice and counsel, to serve as a sounding board for your concerns, to help you brainstorm solutions and, in severe instances only, to mediate issues with your field supervisor.

Finding Appropriate Projects

Many types of projects might qualify as a good PEP. One common trait of such projects is that they must provide a good mix of learning and doing. You must do a single, large project, not several small ones strung together. One of the aims of a PEP is for you to

learn how to manage a considerable piece of work and to deal with the obstacles and challenges that routinely arise in long projects, not short ones. Start by thinking about the deliverable you would like to produce or the experience you would like to gain. Examples of deliverables include usability studies, website or app design/development, dashboards of vital information, program development, business analysis or market research, information system redesign, collection overhauls, and functional or technical requirement documentation.

We advise you to look at what our recent graduates have done for examples of appropriate projects. Our online archive of previous poster session abstracts shows an impressive breadth of creative PEPs completed in many different settings. You can also search for a potential PEP among postings in the 'Job Searching' section in Handshake. Talk with the Career Development Director, who has contacts at many local and national organizations as well as alumni connections.

► <https://ischool.utexas.edu/programs/capstone-archive>

Finding a project takes time, often months. In addition, organizations are dynamic, which means a project you arrange may fall through at the last minute. Having a backup plan and staying in frequent contact with your field supervisor prior to the start of class are good ideas.

Inappropriate Projects

Projects that involve everyday tasks, as if you were a working intern, are not appropriate for your PEP. Projects whose outcome would yield little value to the organization are also inappropriate. Make sure you work on a project that the organization deems a problem worth solving or a need worth filling. In this sense, projects aimed only at providing you with an understanding of an organization are not appropriate. Projects that appear not to match any of your skills are inappropriate as well, but simply repeating a task you have already done fully in a course for an organization is not desired either. Look for projects that tap and extend your skills.

Projects done jointly with another student are also inappropriate. Although a multi-student PEP might allow you to explore a truly large project, it would introduce task and grade dependencies that we prefer to avoid in this culminating experience. In addition, because your PEP is something you are likely to discuss in interviews with employers, we want your contribution and skills to be clear and unquestioned. Finally, projects that are too large in scope to complete by the end of the semester are not appropriate, but you might successfully identify a portion of such a project that would work for your capstone.

Working with Sponsoring Organizations

The site you work with for your PEP should be an established organization. There are no restrictions on whether the environment is corporate, governmental, educational, or a non-profit. The organization should have a mission that is relevant to your iSchool education. If the organization does not have a functional website or does not seem in

line with the field of information you may need to provide further documentation to your instructor as to why you think this organization is a good fit for a PEP.

- ▶ You may conduct your PEP where you already work, though we encourage breadth of experience. If you conduct your PEP in an organization where you already play a role, you must conduct professional work above and beyond whatever obligations you might already have.
- ▶ The organization for which you conduct the project may pay you for this effort.
- ▶ You may conduct the work remotely from the organization in a “virtual PEP”.
- ▶ You may conduct a PEP outside Austin. If so, we will excuse you from the requirement to attend classes. However, you must have a poster in the poster session, even if you cannot attend.
- ▶ Your PEP may involve working with an iSchool professor or staff member, though we encourage external community involvement so that you develop professional references.
- ▶ One of the criteria the INF 388L instructor will consider when approving your project proposal will be how well your proposal and your iSchool education match your stated professional goals.

Field Supervisor

The field supervisor need not be an expert in your domain of interest, but they must be a professional capable of evaluating the contribution of your project to the organization. The field supervisor cannot be a student. Your potential field supervisor will likely want to know what their responsibilities will be.

Your field supervisor will be responsible for:

- ▶ determining your role and liability within the organization
- ▶ orienting you to the organization and the project
- ▶ working with you to set your project schedule, frequency of meetings, attendance at the site, and workplace at the site if needed or desired
- ▶ providing you guidance and feedback
- ▶ conferring with the faculty instructor as needed
- ▶ evaluating your performance

Specifically, with regard to performance evaluation, your field supervisor must approve the completed PEP work for you to receive credit for the course; hence, you should go over the scope of work and the evaluation form with your field supervisor at the beginning of the project. You must give your signed evaluation to the INF 388L instructor at the end of the semester per the INF 388L syllabus instructions.

Getting Approval for Your PEP

You must submit a letter of agreement and your project proposal to the capstone instructor before the deadline. Examples and forms are included in this document and online. Be aware that the examples are meant to help you prepare the proposal and letter of agreement, not models for you to follow explicitly. The letter of agreement and

proposal are similar, except that the proposal is directed to the INF 388L instructor and the letter is directed to the field supervisor.

Letter of Agreement: The letter constitutes your contract with the field supervisor about what work you will perform, what the deliverables will be, and when you will complete them. Make the letter as explicit as possible and describe what will happen should circumstances shift. For example, you might describe what you would do if it became impossible to conduct a particular task, such as stakeholder interviews. The letter of agreement probably does not need as lengthy a narrative description of the work as the proposal (see below) because the field supervisor already knows the context. You will need to submit a signed letter of agreement to the INF 388L instructor.

The letter should:

- ▶ include lists of deliverables, activities, and objectives, as well as a preliminary schedule
- ▶ clarify the working relationship, such as where you will perform the work, the manner of supervision, necessary equipment, means of evaluation, etc.

PEP Proposal: Your INF 388L instructor will evaluate your proposal, look for the elements stated below, and consider overall scope given the 125-hour requirement.

The proposal should include:

- ▶ a clearly stated objective and an overall description of the work to be performed
- ▶ a set of work activities, or the tasks you will complete on the way to the final deliverable
- ▶ the methods you will employ, to the extent that they are known (e.g., focus group interviews, database searches, prototyping, experimentation, use of testbenches, or surveys)
- ▶ a list of deliverables or outcomes, the expected culminating products of your work
- ▶ the criteria for evaluation of your work (e.g., on-time delivery, working functionality, thoroughness of research, responsiveness to others, or actionable recommendations)
- ▶ a preliminary schedule with tasks and dates of completion
- ▶ work expectations (e.g., on-site attendance, meeting attendance, dress, availability, or social media protocol)
- ▶ methods for monitoring project progress (e.g., weekly meetings with your supervisor, routine presentations, or regular emails to the department)
- ▶ a set of learning objectives that specify what you will gain from this work, as in skills you will hone or knowledge you will gain
- ▶ an explanation of how the project fits into your education (make sure to list courses that prepare you for this project)

You will need to work with your instructor to clarify and make any revisions or edits to your proposal that they suggest. Typically, revisions include reducing the scope of your work (you promise too much or are too ambitious), expanding the scope of your work

(you promise too little, perhaps because predicting the duration of tasks was difficult, thus some potential extensions might be added), refining your topic (e.g., your project seems outside your skill set or the broad contours of iSchool work), or correcting violations of specifications for PEP projects (e.g., you list a deadline for work past the semester end date). With revisions, often the instructor is trying to remove ambiguity that could cause problems later so sometimes you simply need to include better descriptions and explanations. In all cases of revision, you will work with your instructor to reach a negotiated and acceptable version.

Getting Credit for Your PEP

To receive credit for INF 388L, and thus for your PEP, you must complete these items:

- ▶ **Class attendance:** If you miss class without negotiating your absence in advance with the instructor, you risk not getting credit for your PEP. A class session typically features advice for presenting yourself professional or provides technical information such as how to construct your e-portfolio. Check your syllabus for the schedule and content of class meetings.
- ▶ **Project Updates:** Complete periodic updates as specified by your instructor (e.g., biweekly status updates, project reflections via a course blog, or learning journal entries).
- ▶ **Project Evaluation:** You must submit an evaluation form completed by your field supervisor (form included here and online).
- ▶ **Poster Session:** You must submit a poster abstract and, unless you are working at a site a significant distance from Austin, participate in the semester-ending poster session in-person.

Master's Report – INF 398R

The master's report is a substantive, publishable-quality paper synthesizing a domain or area of investigation that demonstrates familiarity with major concepts and issues in a theoretical and rigorous manner. Topics may include concepts, theories, and research relevant to a field of interest to you and approved by the faculty supervisor. Your report likely will entail an exploration of problems and professional activities emerging from your program of study.

The master's report provides an opportunity to:

- ▶ develop a greater understanding of a topic related to the field
- ▶ explore problems and issues that you encountered during your studies and that require in-depth review and analysis
- ▶ reflect your learning by serving as the final product of several years of study and reflection
- ▶ demonstrate that you are an insightful consumer of research and can evaluate theory and research in the field
- ▶ develop applications to a significant problem

- ▶ represent a synthesis and application of the literature on a topic or apply the critical evaluation of empirical studies on the topic

Your report should consist of a document with a minimum of 10,000 words and supporting materials as necessary. You should format your completed report in accordance with the requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies. See Office of Graduate Studies online for forms and deadlines as well as their FAQ on format requirements.

- ▶ <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation/deadlines-and-submission-instructions#ThesisorReport>

Getting Approved for Your Master's Report

You must complete and submit the following items to Course Administrator Aaron Ulmer prior to the deadline in order for your master's report to be approved:

- ▶ iSchool Master's Report Proposal Form (form included here and online)

Getting Credit for Your Master's Report

To receive credit for INF 398R, you must complete the following items in addition to writing and submitting your report:

- ▶ **Class attendance in INF388L.** Although you are not enrolled in this course, it serves as the mechanism by which we relay certain information and skills to all graduating students, thus you must attend. You can find the syllabus and course schedule (it does not meet weekly) online where course information is listed. If you miss class without negotiating your absence in advance with the INF 388L instructor, you risk not getting credit for your report. A class session typically features advice for presenting yourself professional or provides technical information such as how to construct your e-portfolio.
- ▶ **Poster Session:** You must submit a poster abstract and participate in the semester-ending poster session in-person.

Master's Thesis – INF 698A/B

A master's thesis is a research project resulting in a substantive paper that involves original collection or treatment of data and/or results. The final product of a master's thesis is a paper of publishable quality. The master's thesis, like the doctoral dissertation, involves original research and exemplifies an original contribution to scholarship.

Your thesis might:

- ▶ include a pilot study upon which the thesis will build
- ▶ reflect a review that is a comprehensive synthesis and analysis of relevant literature

- ▶ feature a research study design
- ▶ note your collection and analysis of data, with a discussion of results
- ▶ critically evaluate empirical studies on the topic

We cannot accept your thesis before the semester in which you apply for graduation. You should format your completed thesis in accordance with the requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies. See Office of Graduate Studies online for forms and deadlines as well as their FAQ on format requirements.

- ▶ <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation/deadlines-and-submission-instructions#ThesisorReport>

Credit Hours

If you choose the master's thesis option (INF 698A/B), we will reduce the number of your elective credit hours by 3 (to 21), and we will increase the number of your exit semester credit hours by 3 (to 6.) We make these adjustments because the master's thesis involves 6 credit hours of work.

Getting Approved for Your Master's Thesis

You must complete and submit the following items to Course Administrator Aaron Ulmer prior to the deadline in order for your master's thesis to be approved:

- ▶ iSchool Master's Thesis Proposal Form (which you submit for INF 698A, included here and online)
- ▶ Required forms from the Office of Graduate Studies (see online)

Getting Credit for Your Master's Thesis

To receive credit for INF698A/B, you must complete these items in addition to writing and submitting your thesis:

- ▶ **Email notice for INF 698B.** Your completed approval form submitted to Course Administrator Aaron Ulmer is your path to credit for INF 698A. Once enrolled in INF 698A, you'll be able to register yourself for INF 698B in the following semester.
- ▶ **Class attendance in INF388L.** Although you are not enrolled in this course, it serves as the mechanism by which we relay certain information and skills to all graduating students, thus you must attend. You can find the syllabus and course schedule (it does not meet weekly) online where course information is listed. If you miss class without negotiating your absence in advance with the INF 388L instructor, you risk not getting credit for your thesis. A class session typically features advice for presenting yourself professional or provides technical information such as how to construct your e-portfolio.
- ▶ **Poster Session:** You must submit a poster abstract and participate in the semester-ending poster session in-person.

School Library Practicum – INF 388R

The practicum is required for students seeking Standard School Librarian Certification in the State of Texas. Each practicum candidate must complete 160 on-site clock hours for the practicum: 80 hours in a public elementary school library and 80 hours in a public middle or public high school library. Candidates will work under the site supervision of certified school librarians and a field supervisor, employed by the University, who holds a school librarian certificate.

Participants will not ordinarily receive compensation, and the course is only offered credit/no credit. Only one of the following may be counted: INF 388Q, INF 388R, INF 388S. You must have consent of the school librarian certificate coordinator to enroll in this option.

Public School Libraries Assignment

Because we must work within the activities of school districts and their administrative staffs, under this option you may not know your library assignments until the beginning of the semester in which you do your work. We will notify you of your assignments as soon as possible. Afterwards, you must make the initial contact with the librarians to begin your work.

Getting Credit for Your School Library Practicum

To receive credit for INF 388R, and thus for your school library practicum, you must complete the following items listed here. **Note:** Practicum students who are non-degree seekers are not required fulfill the Capstone course requirements below.

- ▶ **Class attendance:** If you miss class without negotiating your absence in advance with the instructor, you risk not getting credit for your school library practicum. A class session typically features advice for presenting yourself professional or provides technical information such as how to construct your e-portfolio. Check your syllabus for the schedule and content of class meetings.
- ▶ **Updates:** Complete periodic updates as specified by your instructor (e.g., biweekly status updates, project reflections via a course blog, or learning journal entries).
- ▶ **Evaluation:** Completed evaluations from your library site supervisors and the iSchool field supervisor (forms included here and online).
- ▶ **Poster Session:** You must submit a poster abstract and, unless you are working at a site a significant distance from Austin, participate in the semester-ending poster session in-person.

Note: For additional information and the forms for the School Library Practicum option, see the School Library Practicum handbook or you can download the forms from the website.

Forms, Samples, and Suggestions

The remainder of this handbook includes the following documents:

- ▶ PEP Proposal Form
- ▶ PEP Proposal Example
- ▶ PEP Letter of Agreement Form Template
- ▶ PEP Letter of Agreement Example
- ▶ PEP Field Supervisor Evaluation Form
- ▶ iSchool Master's Report Proposal Form
- ▶ iSchool Master's Thesis Proposal Form

Note: The School Library Practicum forms are available in the School Library Practicum handbook and online. They are not included in this document.



PROPOSAL FOR INF 388L PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE & PROJECT

Student Information

Name:

Email:

UT EID:

Graduation Date:

Capstone Course Instructor:

Brief Proposal Title:

Sponsoring Organization Information

Field Supervisor Name:

Field Supervisor Title:

Email:

Phone:

Organization Name:

Address:

Website:

Proposal Sections

The student's PEP project proposal must include the following sections:

1. **Project Objective:** Clearly state project's objective and describe the work to be performed.
2. **Project Activities and Methods:** List the work activities or tasks you will complete on the way to the final deliverable, including methods as appropriate.
3. **Project Deliverables:** List the expected culminating products of your work.
4. **Criteria for Evaluation:** State the criteria for evaluating your work (e.g., on-time delivery, working functionality, thoroughness of research, responsiveness to others, or actionable recommendations).
5. **Preliminary Schedule:** Outline your schedule with tasks and dates of completion.
6. **Work Expectations:** List your work expectations (e.g., on-site attendance, meeting attendance, dress, availability, or social media protocol).
7. **Monitoring & Evaluating Student Progress:** Describe how progress will be monitored (e.g., weekly meetings with your supervisor, routine presentations, or regular emails to the department).
8. **Specific Learning Objectives:** Outline a set of learning objectives that specify what you will gain from this work (as in skills you will hone or knowledge you will gain).
9. **Fit with My Education:** Explain how the project fits into your education (with courses specified).

PROPOSAL FOR INF 388L PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE & PROJECT

1. Project Objective

I am going to create a database to store and make accessible information regarding Texas butterfly specimens for [organization]. Currently, the 250 butterfly specimens are only available in display cases in Remote Library Branch. This project will determine a consistent means of cataloging the specimens and will provide access to this metadata via a database. Enabling online access to butterfly metadata will increase awareness and use of this collection for research, teaching, and hobbyist purposes, outcomes that [organization] values highly.

2. Project Activities and Methods

I will undertake the following tasks:

- Review specimen collection and existing descriptive information.
- Interview stakeholders (library staff, zoology professors and students, members of the Austin butterfly collecting club) to determine access requirements to the collection.
- Conduct subject research on butterfly collecting and morphology.
- Develop metadata schema based on specimen and metadata review, stakeholder interviews, and subject research.
- Conduct review of metadata schema with project stakeholders.
- Implement metadata schema in database.
- Develop instructions for cataloging specimens with database.
- Review instructions with project stakeholders.
- Use specimen review, stakeholder interviews, and subject research to develop functional requirements for Web site to provide access to the database.

3. Project Deliverables

I will produce the following deliverables:

- A metadata schema for the Texas butterfly specimen collections.
- A database that implements this metadata schema.
- Cataloging instructions for generating metadata about each butterfly specimen.
- A set of functional requirements for a Web site to provide access to the database.

4. Criteria for Evaluation

The field supervisor will evaluate my deliverable based on:

- Comprehensiveness of the schema. For example, does it include all specimens in the collection?
- Ease of use. Does the schema make sense, and is the database easy to use?
- Clarity of instructions. Will future workers be able to generate metadata easily?
- Appropriateness of requirements. Are the requirements reasonable and achievable?

5. Preliminary Schedule

Although unforeseen events may alter our plans, my field supervisor and I propose this preliminary schedule. I will contact them immediately if work falls significantly off this schedule. I will complete the metadata schema in March, 2015; complete the database in April, 2015, and complete cataloging instructions and Web site functional requirements in May, 2015.

6. Work Expectations

- All work will be done at the [name place].
- The database and the Web site will reside at [name place].
- I will not require desk space at [organization].
- For the purposes of this project, I will be considered a volunteer.
- I will come to [organization] for meetings as the field supervisor and I deem necessary.
- The project will end [last INF388L class day of semester].

7. Monitoring and Evaluating Student Progress

- I will email the field supervisor once a week to report progress.
- I will meet them bi-weekly to discuss progress and resolve any emerging issues.
- Changes to this statement of work will be approved by them and you.
- They will complete a final evaluation form that I will supply from the class.
- You have the final approval of credit or no credit for this project.

8. Specific Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this project, I will have:

- developed user interviewing skills
- translated my existing conceptual understanding of knowledge representation to a specific practical problem
- strengthened my existing data modeling skills
- built on my existing database implementation skills
- developed skills in writing clear, complete cataloging guidelines
- developed skills in writing requirements documents that mediate between user and developer perspectives

9. Fit with My Education

This project is a good fit with my courses in organizing information (384C), collection management (384D), and databases (385M), as well as with my less extensive work in archives (389C) and usability (385P). It brings together across these classes knowledge and skills that I have gained, but that I have yet to employ in consort in a real-world project.

Student Signature

Date

PEP LETTER OF AGREEMENT FORM TEMPLATE

[Field Supervisor]
[organization name]
[date]

RE: INF 388L (Professional Experience and Project) statement of work for [student name]

Dear [Field Supervisor]:

Thank you for agreeing to act as field supervisor on behalf of [organization] on my project, [enter brief description to complete sentence]. This letter summarizes our discussions thus far and will serve as our agreement regarding the particulars of the project.

1. Project Objective

[describe project in a single paragraph]

2. Project Activities and Methods

I will undertake the following tasks: [list tasks]

3. Project Deliverables

I will produce the following deliverables: [list deliverables]

4. Criteria for Evaluation

You will evaluate my deliverable based on its: [list criteria and give examples of how your supervisor will evaluate your work against them]

5. Preliminary Schedule

Although we recognize that unforeseen events may alter my plans, I propose this preliminary schedule. I will contact you immediately if work falls significantly off this schedule.

[provide timeline of dates and deliverables]

6. Work Expectations

[list here any expectations that your supervisor may have of you or you of your supervisor]

7. Monitoring and Evaluating Student Progress

[list here how you will keep your supervisor advised of your progress; retain the last three bullet points below]

Changes to this statement of work will be approved by you and the 388L instructor. You will complete a final evaluation form that I will supply from the class.

My INF 388L iSchool instructor has the final approval of credit or no credit for this project.

Field Supervisor Signature and Date

Student Signature and Date

PEP LETTER OF AGREEMENT FORM EXAMPLE

[Field Supervisor]
[organization name]

RE: INF 388L (Professional Experience and Project) statement of work for [student name]

Dear [Field Supervisor]:

Thank you for agreeing to act as field supervisor on behalf of [organization] on my project, a database to store and make accessible information regarding Texas butterfly specimens. This letter summarizes our discussions thus far and will serve as our agreement regarding the particulars of the project.

1. Project Objective

Currently, the 250 butterfly specimens are only available in display cases in Remote Library Branch. This project will determine a consistent means of cataloging the specimens and will provide access to this metadata via a database. Enabling online access to butterfly metadata will increase awareness and use of this collection for research, teaching, and hobbyist purposes.

2. Project Activities and Methods

I will undertake the following tasks:

- Review specimen collection and existing descriptive information.
- Interview stakeholders (library staff, zoology professors and students, members of the Austin butterfly collecting club to determine access requirements to the collection.
- Conduct subject research on butterfly collecting and morphology.
- Develop metadata schema based on specimen and metadata review, stakeholder interviews, and subject research.
- Conduct review of metadata schema with project stakeholders.
- Implement metadata schema in database.
- Develop instructions for cataloging specimens with database.
- Review instructions with project stakeholders.
- Use specimen review, stakeholder interviews, and subject research to develop functional requirements for Web site to provide access to the database.

3. Project Deliverables

I will produce the following deliverables:

- A metadata schema for the Texas butterfly specimen collections.
- A database that implements this metadata schema.
- Cataloging instructions for generating metadata about each butterfly specimen.
- A set of functional requirements for a Web site to provide access to the database.

4. Criteria for Evaluation

You will evaluate my deliverable based on its:

- Comprehensiveness of the schema. For example, does it include all specimens in the collection?

- Ease of use. Does the schema make sense and is the database easy to use?
- Clarity of instructions. Will future workers be able to generate metadata easily?
- Appropriateness of requirements. Are the requirements reasonable and achievable?

5. Preliminary Schedule

Although we recognize that unforeseen events may alter our plans, we propose this preliminary schedule. I will contact you immediately if work falls significantly off this schedule. I will complete the metadata schema in March, 2015; complete the database in April, 2015, and complete cataloging instructions and Web site functional requirements in May, 2015.

6. Work Expectations

- All work will be done at the [name place].
- The database and the Web site will reside at [name place].
- I will not require desk space at [organization].
- For the purposes of this project, I will be considered a volunteer.
- I will come to [organization] for meetings as we both deem necessary.
- The project will end [last INF388L class day of semester].

7. Monitoring and Evaluating Student Progress

- I will email you once a week to report progress.
- We will meet bi-weekly to discuss progress and resolve any emerging issues.
- Changes to this statement of work will be approved by you and the 388L instructor.
- You will complete a final evaluation form that I will supply from the class.
- My INF 388L iSchool instructor has the final approval of credit or no credit for this project.

Field Supervisor Signature and Date

Student Signature and Date

What pleased you about this project and the student's performance?

In what areas, if any, did the student struggle? What might the student have done differently?

Please provide any additional comments about this project or recommendations that might help us improve the Capstone for field supervisors and for students.

Field Supervisor Signature

Date



PROPOSAL FOR INF 398R MASTER'S REPORT

Student Information	
Name:	UT EID:
Email:	
Semester you wish to register for INF 398R:	
Expected Graduation Date:	
Proposed Report Title:	

Instructions: Secure the signature of your faculty sponsor, second reader, and the iSchool Graduate Advisor. Then submit this form to gradoffice@ischool.utexas.edu to complete your registration.

Signatures	
Supervising Faculty Member Name:	
Signature:	Date:
Second Faculty Reader Name:	
Signature:	Date:
Graduate Advisor Name: Amelia Acker	aacker@ischool.utexas.edu
Signature:	Date:

Proposal Instructions

Your proposal should include a discussion of the topic, research methods, and a tentative timeline.



PROPOSAL FOR INF 698A MASTER'S THESIS

Student Information	
Name:	UT EID:
Email:	
Semester you wish to register for INF 698A:	
Expected Graduation Date:	
Proposed Thesis Title:	

Instructions: Secure the signature of your faculty sponsor, second reader, and the iSchool Graduate Advisor. Then submit this form to gradoffice@ischool.utexas.edu to complete your registration.

Note: Upon completion of INF 698A, you will be permitted to register yourself for INF 698B the following semester. If you're unable to add the class in the online registration system, please contact the graduate student services office for assistance.

Signatures	
Supervising Faculty Member Name:	
Signature:	Date:
Second Faculty Reader Name:	
Signature:	Date:
Graduate Advisor Name: Amelia Acker	aacker@ischool.utexas.edu
Signature:	Date:

Proposal Instructions

Your proposal should include a discussion of the topic, research methods, and a tentative timeline.