

Designing a CAPSTONE experience

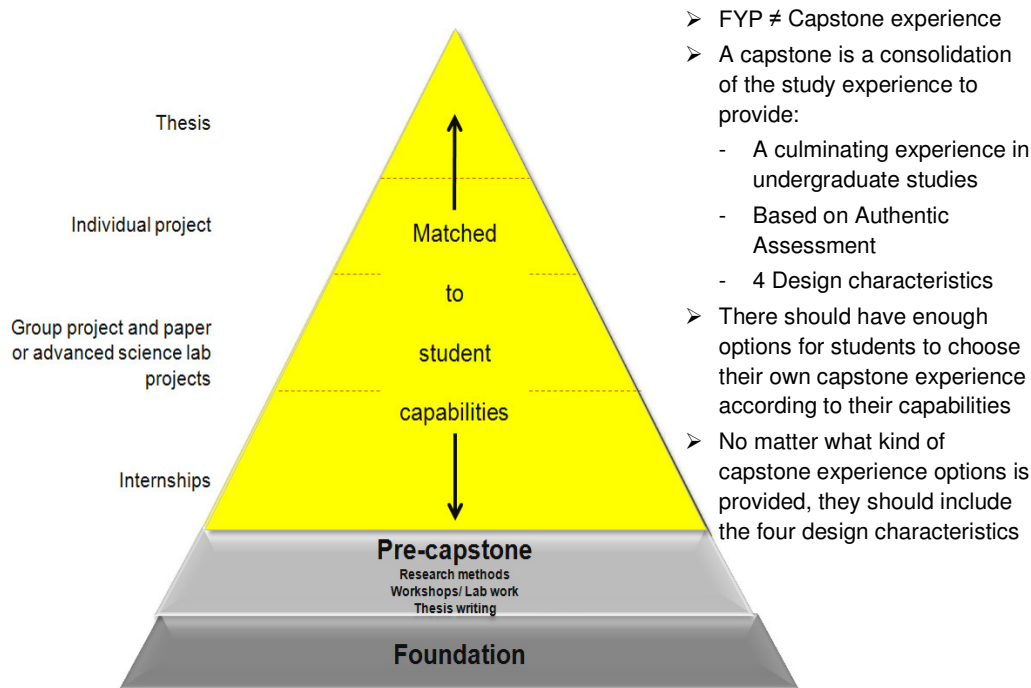
What and Why

The systematic inclusion of a capstone activity that represents the **culminating experience** of the undergraduate students' university life is an important development in the normative four-year undergraduate curriculum in Hong Kong.

A capstone typically extends over the final 12 months in the form of research or a final-year project, in every major programme. This feature of the 'new' curriculum, flows naturally from the desired outcomes embraced by the University – that students should be encouraged to become self-directed autonomous learners. As PVC (T&L) Professor Young remarked in a recent forum, 'In many circumstances this may be an even more important outcome than subject knowledge itself.'

In brief, a capstone needs to be student-focused and self-directed, the final challenge before going out to the real world as an autonomous life-long learner.

Illustration: Capstone design in the normative 4-year curriculum:



Adapted from: UCLA Report for the WASC *Capacity and Preparatory Review* (December 2007) Essay 5. *Shaping Undergraduate Education via the Capstone Experience* http://www.wasc.ucla.edu/CPR_Essay5.pdf, 2010-11 UCLA General Catalog

Capstone Design: How

Step 1: Decide your purpose – choose one emphasis

Developmental: a culminating experience to facilitate transition generally into the workplace	Assessment of programme level learning outcomes & to improve instructional practices
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Step 2: Choose the type of course or combination of types that best fits your purpose

Interdisciplinary courses	Discipline and department-based courses	Transition courses (to work/ graduate school)	Career-planning courses
Synthesize GE, Major and Co-curricular learning	Synthesize discipline knowledge and generic capabilities	Life transition planning, self-assessment	Job search, financial planning, first year on the job

Step 3: Consider these four design characteristics in your proposed capstone activity

Integration** (I)	Reflection (R)	Closure (C)	Transition (T)
Integrate knowledge and skills	Reflect on development - academically, socially and personally.	Close undergraduate student life	Transition from undergraduate studies to being self-autonomous learners.

Step 4: Choose the activities and assessment

What are we developing/ or assessing (Indicative)	How (Authentic learning activities) (Indicative)	Authentic assessment methods (Indicative)	Design Characteristics			
			(I)	(R)	(C)	(T)
University community	Project work, service	Group project, self reflection	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discipline knowledge	Project work, group presentation, simulation, thesis	Presentation, peer assessment, group projects, reflections	✓	✓	✓	✓
Academic skills, self-directed learning e.g. research, collaboration	Group presentation/case analysis/ Simulation/ Lab experiment report	Presentation, participation, peer assessment	✓	✓		✓
Self awareness	Reflection journal / Blog	Reflection; Pass/Fail	✓	✓		
Leadership skills/ Teamwork/ Interpersonal skills	Group project, team-based activities, Career planning	Group project, peer assessment, reflection, presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Problem-solving skills	Case analysis/ Group/ Research project/ Simulation	Group project, peer assessment, reflection	✓	✓		
Citizenship	Service learning	Not assessed			✓	✓

** For more information, please see: <http://irs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/sbarnett/edpsy399/declarative.html>)

Overseas examples:

Capstone Majors of UCLA

<http://www.registrar.ucla.edu/catalog/catalog10-11-22.htm>

Capstone Studies in the University of Melbourne

<http://www.csc.unimelb.edu.au/experience/professional/capstone.html>

Senior Capstone at Portland State University, US

www.oir.pdx.edu/portweb/published_pages/prototype/themes/cp/capstone/