

UW School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences – Undergraduate Program Forms

SAFS Capstone – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

All forms referenced in this FAQ document may be found on the SAFS website: tinyurl.com/SAFScapstone

CAPSTONE COURSES

What courses do I take for capstone?

The capstone is required for the SAFS BS and consists of three required courses, taken in order by course number:

1. FISH 493 Capstone 1: Proposal (1 credit)
2. FISH 494 Capstone 2: Research (3 credits)
3. FISH 495 Capstone 3: Research Synthesis (3 credits)

Coursework is typically taken consecutively beginning sometime during late Junior or early Senior year. In rare circumstances, it may be possible to take FISH 494 and 495 concurrently, with permission of both the Capstone Coordinator and Capstone Adviser.

How do I sign up for capstone courses?

To sign up for capstone courses, contact the Capstone Coordinator (gjensen@uw.edu).

What pre-requisites do I take for capstone?

FISH 290 Scientific Writing and Q SCI 381 Intro to Probability & Statistics

Is there an Honors section for capstone?

Yes, but there are no extra credits. Honors capstone expectations will be communicated on the AFS departmental Honors website.

CAPSTONE ADVISERS

How do I find a faculty adviser?

What areas are you most interested in researching? Look at the SAFS faculty profiles, contact the relevant faculty member, and ask them if they are available to mentor you!

Does my adviser have to be a member of the SAFS faculty?

Simply, no. Faculty in other departments (such as Oceanography, Biology, or Marine Affairs) and SAFS Affiliate faculty can serve as your capstone adviser. SAFS postdocs are also eligible with prior approval.

How often should I meet with my faculty adviser?

You should meet with your faculty sponsor at least once a quarter, and at least three times a quarter with your worksite supervisor (if you have one).

What are the faculty adviser's responsibilities?

- Review and sign the FISH 494 Contract.
- Review and approve the Capstone Proposal.
- Supervise the research project.
- Communicate with the worksite supervisor, if applicable.
- Meet with the student to assess progress.
- Sign the FISH 495 Contract before student can obtain entry code from Capstone Coordinator.
- Provide substantive editorial comments on a draft of the final paper.
- Attend your presentation.
- Assign a grade!

What is a workplace supervisor?

Students might be conducting research directly under the supervision of someone other than their faculty sponsor. Worksite supervisors may be SAFS staff scientists, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, or agency personnel (e.g., NMFS, WDFW)

UW School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences – Undergraduate Program Forms

What are the workplace supervisor's responsibilities?

- Review and sign the FISH 494 Contract.
- Review and approve the Capstone Proposal.
- Supervise the project, including meeting with the student at least three times per quarter.
- Provide feedback to the Faculty Sponsor about student's progress.
- Provide substantive editorial comments on a draft of the final paper.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

How do I find a capstone project?

What would you like to study? Examine the faculty profiles to find someone who shares your area of interest. Is there a class you particularly enjoyed, or a professor you would like to work with? Talk to the Capstone Coordinator.

How comprehensive does a capstone project have to be?

You will need to complete a quarter of data gathering and a quarter of analysis and writing. The research should result in a research paper and an oral presentation that meets the standards typical of a professional journal in the biological sciences.

During these two quarters, you will need to spend at least nine *efficient* hours a week on your research for each of the quarters (3 credits = 9 hours a week, 1 quarter = 11 weeks). You may register for additional research credits (Fish 499) if your research project is innovative, requires work over and above the capstone, and meets your advisors' approval.

When should I start my capstone?

You should always be open to possible capstone opportunities. If you have some idea of what you want to work on, think about how the research might fit in to your schedule. Some projects are seasonal (e.g., salmon spawning) while many lab-based studies can be completed at any time of year.

I work for(Employer/Agency). Can my work also serve as my capstone?

Maybe. The decision depends on whether the work fits the criteria for independent research. Discuss this possibility with your faculty adviser and your workplace supervisor. In many cases, students are able to gather data incidental to the work that they are being paid to complete, and use their findings for their capstone.

I'm going to a lab in the tropics. Can I conduct my capstone project there?

Maybe. Find a faculty adviser **before** you go, not after you get back. Your SAFS Faculty Adviser needs to help you define and design your project and provide you with the expertise to guide you in proper sampling for statistical purposes. Your faculty adviser is the person who ultimately decides your grade, so that's who you want to keep happy!

I have a project that I can start on right away, but I have not taken the Capstone Prep class (FISH 493) yet. Can I still do the project?

Yes, but talk to the Capstone Coordinator first. You'll still have to write your proposal for 493 and fulfill the other requirements of the class.

I wrote a proposal for 493, but now I'm switching to an entirely different project. Do I have to write a new proposal?

This decision depends on your adviser, but it is strongly recommended. Having a proposal ensures that everyone involved knows their responsibilities and the timetable for the project.

FUNDING

Is there any funding available to help support my project?

Yes. Some capstones are part of larger studies funded by research grants that have been awarded to faculty. There is also funding available from SAFS. There is a space on the FISH 494 Contract where you can request support for your project.

UW School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences – Undergraduate Program Forms

What activities are eligible for funding under SAFS awards?

Funds are mostly used for supplies, equipment, travel (e.g., Fleet Services_rental, ferry, etc.), and some types of lodging. They cannot be used for airfare or food.

PRESENTATIONS

When is the SAFS capstone symposium held?

The symposium is typically held the week before finals in Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters. Students graduating in Summer quarter usually present to their lab group or to a similar gathering.

My adviser is going to be absent when I am giving my presentation. What can I do?

Let the Capstone Coordinator know at least a few days before the SAFS symposium. Your presentation will be videotaped and sent to your adviser, along with your PowerPoint slides.

My project does not fit into the usual scientific paper format – can I submit it for my capstone?

Discuss your paper with your adviser to see what is acceptable.

When do I turn in my final paper?

Establish the date for final submission with your adviser. They need time to read and grade your paper, along with their other teaching responsibilities.