

SUNY Buffalo State

Department of Speech-Language Pathology

Capstone Experiences

New York State Department of Education regulations require that all master's degrees include a culminating experience such as a master's thesis, a master's project, or a special project, which we refer to hereafter as Capstone experiences (see [Department Expectations: Curriculum | New York State Education Department](#)).

In support of these guidelines, the successful completion of either a digital portfolio or a research project or thesis is REQUIRED for conferral of our master's degree.

Students must elect to complete a digital portfolio or a research project by the middle of October of their second year in the program. If students elect to complete a master's thesis, they must decide to do so within their first year of graduate school.

Capstone Experience 1.0: Digital Portfolio:

Students choosing the digital portfolio option must also enroll in SLP 625 (3 credits).

The digital portfolio option gives students an opportunity to integrate the breadth and depth of their academic knowledge and clinical experiences to create a holistic collection of artifacts which represent their growth throughout the graduate program.

Students will be required to reflect on their knowledge and skills after their first year in the program, as well as at the end of their program. This experience will result in the submission of a final culminating artifact, which will require students to connect their academic knowledge, clinical skills, and cultural responsiveness with evidence-based practice. A faculty panel will independently evaluate each portfolio.

Students are required to:

- Upload the required artifacts to their individual portfolio folder each semester
- Update the artifact checklist with the date the artifact was uploaded
- Attest that each document was uploaded into their folders by signing the Digital Portfolio Verification Form and uploading the form into the Checklist Folder

Capstone Experience 2.0: Research Options:

2.1: The most common research option is completion of a master's project. Projects are typically an extension of faculty research. In some cases, master's projects may be done in pairs, if the faculty research mentor determines that the scope of the project is sufficiently extensive. Students are responsible for identifying a potential faculty research mentor and should approach that person as early as possible.

2.2 The second research option is the completion of a master's thesis. This is a more extensive research endeavor and typically involves the development and execution of student-originated research. Theses are always completed individually. Students considering a master's thesis should begin identifying an area of interest and potential faculty mentor during their first year of graduate school. Students choosing this option must enroll in SLP 695 (3-6 credits).

Importantly, it is up to the discretion of each faculty member to decide if a student is able to complete a master's project or thesis. If a faculty member does not have the resources, expertise, and/or time to complete a project or thesis in the student's area of interest the faculty member can choose to decline the request and may direct the student to another faculty member.

The faculty mentor will provide the student with a syllabus and a timeline that outlines the student's specific expectations and projected completion dates. This syllabus and timeline may change at the discretion of the faculty member, depending upon the specific goals and progress of the research.

The following description outlines the typical requirements for students who are completing a master's project or thesis with any faculty member in the Buffalo State Speech-Language Pathology Department.

- Completion of human subjects IRB/CITI training, where appropriate
- Examination and understanding of IRB research protocol
- Development of research aims, questions, and/or hypotheses
- Completion of a literature review/search
- Analysis of data
- Completion of a summary or discussion that synthesizes the study's findings
- Completion of a final paper, written in APA format, which includes:
 - Introduction: Outlines the problem, needs, research questions, task, objectives, or project.
 - Literature Review: Review relevant literature in the discipline related to the project.
 - Methodology/Purpose: Description of the approach, design, methods, data collection, or appropriate procedures used to investigate the problem and/or complete the project.
 - Results, Analysis, Outcomes, Discussion: Representation of the findings or outcomes of the project.
 - Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations: Discussion of the ways in which the project contributes to the field.

Some variation from this suggested outline may be appropriate to accommodate projects or theses with differing methodologies (e.g., discipline-specific literature reviews, meta-analyses, historical analyses, etc.). In these cases, an alternative research outline will be created by the student and faculty mentor.

In addition to the written document, students who complete a master's project or thesis will be expected to create a Power Point (oral) presentation and/or a professional poster that will be presented to the academic community. The venues for these presentations may be local, national, or international and include but are not limited to SUNY Buffalo State Student Research & Creativity Celebration, SUNY Buffalo State Graduate Research Fair, NYSSLHA, ASHA, or other professional conferences in our or a related discipline.

Final grades for the master's project or thesis will not be submitted until all project requirements and final revisions are completed. Students are required to prepare and submit two bound copies of the final project: one to be kept by the faculty mentor and the other to be placed in the departmental research project archive. Students are encouraged to keep another bound copy for themselves.

Capstone Remediation:

- Remediation activities will be individualized and will be based on the specific area(s) that have been identified as requiring improvement.
- In the unlikely event that the Capstone remediation step is not completed, a new remediation plan will be developed. This may lead to a delay in your graduation date.