

Syracuse University
Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs
International Relations Program

CAPSTONE FAQs

Q. What are the requirements for the capstone research project?

- A. “The senior capstone for the major in International Relations requires **an original substantive research project combining the student’s topic and region concentrations.**” Requirements are detailed on the [International Relations Answers page](#).

Q. Do I have to submit a proposal for my capstone project?

- A. Yes, the International Relations Program requires a written proposal approved by your seminar instructor, along with a signed “Capstone Planning Form.” If your instructor requires a proposal, then submit it to the IR Office on the same deadline that you have for your instructor. If your instructor does not require a proposal, the IR Office still requires that you submit one to us for review by midterm. The proposal must be accompanied by a “Capstone Planning Form. Once you have submitted your signed [Capstone Planning Form](#) and proposal and these have been reviewed by the IR Program core faculty and accepted as appropriate for your topic and region concentrations, your name will be added to the “IR Capstone” page on Blackboard under “My Organizations,” and you will access to submit a copy of your final paper there.

Q. Who grades my capstone project?

- A. Your seminar instructor will grade the capstone research project and your other work for an overall grade in the seminar. For your project and course to count for the International Relations capstone and seminar, a minimum grade is “C” for both. For a Distinction capstone, the minimum grade is “B” for both.

Q. How long does the capstone paper have to be?

- A. For the regular capstone, the minimum benchmark length for substance is 4,000 words, not counting title, abstract, illustrations, and bibliography. For the Distinction capstone, the minimum benchmark length is 6,000 words, not including the front and end matter noted above. There is no maximum wordcount or page limit.

Q. How are finished capstone projects submitted, reviewed, and evaluated by the IR Program?

- A. When your capstone research project is due to your seminar instructor, you will also submit a copy on Blackboard under “My Organizations” and “IR Capstone Semester Year” (e.g. “IR Capstone Spring 2021”) for the IR core faculty to review against the capstone requirements of combining your topic/region concentrations, substance/depth (4,000/6,000 word essay), and quality (original analysis of primary sources). You will then receive an email indicating the outcome of the review. Most capstone projects are quickly approved in this review.

Q. What happens if my capstone project is not approved?

- A. While most capstone research projects are approved on first review, occasionally a project may require revisions. The submission link on Blackboard under “My Organizations” also includes a submission link for revisions if any are required. The review email will provide revision instructions and indicate a deadline for submission of the revised capstone project.

Q. Are any samples of previous capstones available?

- A. Yes! Several capstones have been published and are available on-line:

Dalton, Lili. 2016. [“Treaties and Trust: The Potential for Israeli Nuclear Cooperation.”](#) Sigma Iota Rho Journal of International Relations 18: 120-144.

Dorner, Alexis. 2018. [“The Nuclear Ban Treaty: Advocates, Neutrals, and Opponents in the European Union.”](#) Dartmouth Undergraduate Journal of Politics, Economics, and World Affairs: 1 (1) Article 5.

Tree, Thomas J. 2015. [“Nuclear Proliferation Realities: Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.”](#) Sigma Iota Rho Journal of International Relations 17: 58-75.

You may also read Honors capstone projects in International Relations through the [Syracuse University Libraries SURFACE archive](#) and view [Honors presentations](#) from Spring 2020. Additionally, some instructors invite IR majors to observe the capstone presentations in their seminars, so watch for “Curious about Capstones?” emails on our IR major listserv!

Q. Do I have to do a formal presentation of my capstone research project?

- A. For the regular capstone, there is no required public presentation of the research project. Faculty instructors in IR-approved senior seminars may require an in-class presentation of the capstone research project, but this depends on the seminar. All candidates for Distinction in International Relations must do a public presentation to the Maxwell faculty; this is typically done in the annual Maxwell Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship. Seniors not participating in the Distinction Program but who produce outstanding projects may also be sponsored by their seminar instructor to present their capstone research project in the [Maxwell Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship](#).

Q. How can I attempt to publish my capstone research project?

- A. Information about seeking publication of your capstone project can be found on the IR Program Answers page, [Publication Opportunities](#).