

MANUAL
CAPSTONE PROJECT
BS Gender & Women Studies

Course Code: 9186



Department of Gender & Women Studies
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

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1. Introduction

The capstone project is mandatory for the completion of the degree; it is 3 credit hours. A capstone project is work done by students involving an intellectual endeavor and demonstration of their academic knowledge in a mini research report. It is supervised and graded by a faculty member. It cannot be substantiated by opting for another course. The capstone project enables the students to understand how the theoretical knowledge related to the gender studies discipline can be applied to practical, real-life-based situations in the form of the research project report. For the data collection, students are encouraged to select the same organization where they completed their internship. The organization selected should be either from any public sector organization or a non-governmental organization.

After completion of the mandatory coursework, the students are required to submit a capstone project research report to the Department of Gender & Women Studies in the final semester. In case the report is not up to the prescribed standards and format, the students would be asked to improve it as per the comments of the faculty member and resubmit.

2. Purpose of the Capstone Project & Objectives

Students will gain a foundational understanding of a subject or instrument and learn new concepts from industry experts through their capstone project. Above all, students will be able to identify latent human needs by looking past apparent trends in quantitative and qualitative data to comprehend underlying drivers and motivations. They will also develop job-relevant skills through practical projects. Finally, students will be able to analyze the production of quantitative data, spot gender-related data gaps, and apply analytics to find intersectional gender-based insights. The capstone project is offered in the last semester and comprises three credit hours. It comprised 6 weeks of activity during which students applied their theoretical knowledge of gender studies analysis into practice by completing a research project. At the end, the student will write a 6000- to 8000-word document and present their topic in the form of an oral presentation in front of the faculty. The capstone project has certain specific objectives.

- The capstone project will assist students in investigating methods for identifying and rephrasing problem statements in order to understand conventional approaches to an issue.
- To comprehend the ethical and legal frameworks for gathering, preserving, evaluating, and sharing data to lessen the vulnerabilities of those who are marginalized.
- To analyze the production of quantitative data, spot gender-related data gaps, and apply analytics to find intersectional gender-based insights.
- The capstone project will teach students how to evaluate and use qualitative and quantitative information on stakeholders' and beneficiaries' demands
- It will assist students in working with stakeholders to use ethnographic and community-based research approaches to obtain a thorough understanding of unmet needs.

3. Selection of an Organization for the Capstone Project:

A student is advised to select an organization for the capstone project for the mini research report, where primary/secondary data for the research topic can be selected from the organizations with which they are familiar and have already completed internships in the previous semester. A student can focus his/her study in the field related to addressing gender-based analysis for the completion of a capstone project. The following institutions can be consulted, for instance: educational institutions, law, health, media, financial, religious & political institutions, and community-based organizations, INGOs & local NGOs. Students can also reach out to ministries of social welfare & human rights and other women's departments at the provincial & federal levels.

1. Educational institutions, i.e., schools, colleges, universities, skills training centers, for instance, TEVTA, etc.
2. Health institutions such as basic health units, district health units, hospitals, etc.
3. Media channels, i.e., radio, print, & TV channels etc.
4. Financial institutions like Banks etc.
5. Legal institutions, law firms, etc.
6. Law enforcement agencies, i.e., police, etc.
7. Women's research resource centers/advocacy-based organizations.
8. Policy Think Tanks
9. Political Institutions
10. Union Councils etc.
11. Religious Institutions Mosques, religious seminaries etc.
12. Entrepreneurship-based organizations
13. Private firms
14. Call centers, etc.
15. Hospitality industry
16. Embassies

***Note:**

This list is not inclusive at all; it is compiled to give students a rough idea of where they can gather data for the capstone project. Students are advised to select the same organization for the capstone project where they completed their internship because it will be easier for them to have rapport and to get an insightful analysis in the form of a mini professional research report.

4. Tentative Work Plan:

The department will provide students with a general list of work to be done in the course of twelve weeks of the **Capstone project**. Students should bear in mind that the previously done internship will provide a baseline for the capstone project. It is advised that students smartly select an organization for their internship so that they can easily complete their capstone project.

4.1 Project Work Plan (Suggested Timeline)

Time	Activities
Weeks 1–2	Topic selection, supervisor approval, literature review
Weeks 3–4	Research design, data collection tools, proposal writing
Weeks 5–6	Data collection (survey/interview/secondary data)
Weeks 7–8	Data analysis, preparation of charts/tables
Weeks 9–10	Drafting chapters and submitting for supervisor feedback
Weeks 11–12	Final editing, proofreading, and submission

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA RUBRIC

Your capstone project will be evaluated on the following scale (Total: 100 Marks):

Section	Criteria	Marks	Obtained
A. Background	Topic selection and variables	10	
	Literature review and gap	10	
	Objectives/purpose	5	
	Research questions/hypotheses	5	
B. Methodology	Research approach and design	5	
	Population	5	
	Sample and Sampling technique	5	
	Tool development and validation	15	
	Data collection procedure	10	
C. Findings	Analysis and interpretation	15	
D. Conclusions	Conclusions	5	
	Recommendations	5	
E. References	References (APA format)	5	
TOTAL		100	

A. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1. Topic Selection and Variable Description (10 Marks)

1.1 Why Did You Select This Topic?

Provide a detailed explanation of your motivation for selecting this specific research topic. Discuss:

- Personal interest or professional experience that led to the topic selection
- Relevance of the topic to your field of study
- Significance of the problem in your professional context
- Any gap you observed in current practice or knowledge that prompted this study

1.2 Describe the Variables in Your Topic

Clearly identify and describe:

- **Independent variable(s):** What factors will you manipulate or examine
- **Dependent variable(s):** What outcomes you will measure
- **Moderating/Mediating variables (if applicable):** Other factors that may influence the relationship
- **Relationship between variables:** How the variables are theoretically connected

2. Literature Review and Gap Identification (10 Marks)

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Provide a comprehensive review of:

- Seminal works and recent research in your field
- Different theoretical perspectives on your topic
- Key findings from previous studies
- Relevant conceptual frameworks and models
- Current trends and developments in the area

2.2 Identification of Research Gap

Based on the literature review, identify:

- The specific gap in existing research that your study addresses
- How previous studies have approached similar problems
- What is missing or unclear in the current knowledge base

The unique contribution your study will make to the field

3. Objectives/Purpose of the Study (5 Marks)

3.1 Research Objectives

State the primary and secondary objectives of your study:

- **Primary Objective:** The main goal of your research
- **Secondary Objectives:** Additional specific goals that support the primary objective
- Ensure objectives are clear, measurable, and aligned with your research problem

Format Example:

- To identify factors affecting...
- To explore the relationship between...
- To evaluate the effectiveness of...
- To develop a framework for...

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses (5 Marks)

4.1 Research Questions

Formulate clear, focused research questions that:

- Directly address your research objectives
- Are answerable through your research design
- Guide the data collection and analysis process

Example Format:

- RQ1: How does [variable A] influence [variable B] in the context of...?
- RQ2: What are the barriers to...?
- RQ3: To what extent do...?

4.2 Hypotheses (if applicable)

If your study is quantitative, state your hypotheses:

- **Null Hypothesis (H₀):** No significant relationship exists...
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):** A significant relationship exists...

B. METHODOLOGY

5. Research Approach and Design (5 Marks)

5.1 Research Paradigm

Specify whether your research is:

- **Quantitative:** Focused on numerical data and statistical analysis
- **Qualitative:** Focused on descriptive data and thematic analysis
- **Mixed Methods:** Combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches

5.2 Research Design

Describe your specific research design:

- **For Quantitative Studies:**
 - Experimental, Quasi-experimental, Correlational, Survey
- **For Qualitative Studies:**
 - Phenomenological, Grounded Theory, Case Study, Ethnographic
- **For Mixed Methods:**
 - Explanatory Sequential, Exploratory Sequential, Convergent Parallel

5.3 Justification

Explain why this approach and design are most appropriate for your research questions and objectives.

6. Population of the Study (5 Marks)

6.1 Target Population

Define your population clearly:

- Who comprises the population? (specific characteristics)
- Geographic location and scope
- Time period relevant to the population
- Total population size (if known)

6.2 Population Characteristics

Describe important characteristics of the population:

- Demographic information
- Geographic distribution
- Institutional/organizational context
- Any inclusion/exclusion criteria for the study

Example: "The population consists of 500 primary school teachers in Rawalpindi district working in public sector schools during the 2025-2026 academic year."

. Sample and Sampling Technique (5 Marks)

7.1 Sample Size

Specify:

- Number of participants/units in your sample
- How the sample size was determined (power analysis, saturation, convenience, etc.)

- Justification for sample size

7.2 Sampling Technique

Describe your sampling method:

- **Probability Sampling:** Random selection, Systematic, Stratified, Cluster
- **Non-probability Sampling:** Convenience, Purposive, Snowball, Quota

7.3 Selection Criteria

State inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- Who will be included in the study
- Who will be excluded and why

Any specific conditions for participant selection

8. Research Tool and Instrument Validation (15 Marks)

8.1 Tool Selection/Development

Describe:

- What data collection instrument(s) will you use (questionnaire, interview, observation schedule, test, focus group, etc.)
- Whether the tool is established or researcher-developed
- If developed, provide the developmental process

8.2 Tool Description

Provide detailed information:

- Components and dimensions of the tool
- Number of items/questions
- Response format (Likert scale, open-ended, multiple choice, etc.)
- Scoring procedure and interpretation
- Include the actual tool or representative samples (in the appendix if space permits)

8.3 Validity of the Tool

Discuss:

- **Content Validity:** How well the tool measures what it's supposed to measure
- **Construct Validity:** How well the tool measures the theoretical construct
- **Criterion Validity:** Relationship to external criteria
- Evidence of validity from literature or pilot testing

8.4 Reliability of the Tool

Report:

- **Internal Consistency:** Cronbach's Alpha or similar measure
- **Test-Retest Reliability:** Correlation coefficients, if applicable
- **Inter-rater Reliability:** For observational tools
- Acceptable reliability levels achieved (typically ≥ 0.70)

9. Data Collection Procedure (10 Marks)

9.1 Treatment/Intervention Protocol

If applicable, describe:

- Step-by-step procedure of any treatment or intervention
- Duration and frequency of intervention
- Activities involved
- Controls and ethical considerations

9.2 Data Collection Process

Describe the systematic procedure:

- **Step 1:** [Detail first step]
- **Step 2:** [Detail second step]
- **Step 3:** [Detail third step]
- Continue as needed...

Include:

- Timeline and duration
- Location and setting
- Access and permissions obtained
- Informed consent procedures
- Methods to ensure participant comfort and confidentiality
- Any challenges anticipated and mitigation strategies

9.3 Ethical Considerations

Address:

- Informed consent from participants
- Confidentiality and data protection measures
- Approval from institutional ethics committees (if required)

- Voluntary participation and right to withdraw
- Potential risks and benefits to participants
- Cultural sensitivity considerations

C. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION / FINDINGS

10. Data Analysis and Findings (15 Marks)

10.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

If applicable, provide:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequency distributions, means, standard deviations
- **Inferential Statistics:** t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, regression analysis
- **Tables and Figures:** Present results in organized tables with clear titles and numbers
- **Statistical Significance:** Report p-values and confidence intervals

10.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

If applicable, provide:

- **Coding Process:** Initial, focused, axial coding procedures
- **Thematic Analysis:** Major themes and subthemes identified
- **Participant Quotes:** Representative quotes supporting major themes
- **Narrative Description:** Rich, detailed description of findings

10.3 Mixed Methods Integration

If applicable, show:

- How quantitative and qualitative findings relate
- Areas of convergence and divergence
- Integrated interpretation of both data types

10.4 Presentation of Results

Organize findings according to research questions/objectives:

D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Conclusions (5 Marks)

11.1 Summary of Key Findings

Summarize the major findings in relation to:

- Research questions posed at the beginning
- Objectives set out in the study
- Theoretical frameworks used

11.2 Interpretation of Results

Discuss:

- What the findings mean in practical and theoretical contexts
- How findings align with or contradict previous research
- Unexpected findings and possible explanations
- Limitations that may affect interpretation

11.3 Study Conclusions

State clear conclusions:

- About the research problem and objectives
- About the variables and relationships studied
- Implications for theory and practice
- Contribution to the field

12. Recommendations (5 Marks)

12.1 Practical Recommendations

Based on findings, recommend:

- Actions for practitioners and professionals
- Policy implications and suggestions
- Changes in practice or procedures
- Implementation strategies

12.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Suggest:

- Areas for further investigation
- Methodological improvements for future studies
- New variables or populations to explore

Unanswered questions emerging from this study

E. REFERENCES

13. Complete Reference List (5 Marks)

List all sources cited in the report following **APA Manual (7th Edition)** format:

Journal Article:

[1] Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (2024). Title of article. *Journal Title*, 15(3), 234-256.
<https://doi.org/10.xxxx/xxxxx>

Book:

[2] Author, C. C. (2024). *Book title* (2nd ed.). Publisher Name.

Chapter in Edited Book:

[3] Author, D. D. (2024). Chapter title. In E. E. Editor (Ed.), *Book title* (pp. 123-145). Publisher.

Website/Online Source:

[4] Author, F. F. (2024, January 15). Web article title. *Website Name*. <https://www.example.com/article>

Organization/Government Report:

[5] Organization Name. (2024). *Report title*. <https://www.example.org/report>

Submission Requirements

- Report must be typed in the English language only
- Language other than English will NOT be accepted
- Submit on the LMS portal within the specified deadline
- Include all required sections and documentation
- Ensure no plagiarism (originality report may be required)

Quality Standards

- Research must be ethically conducted
- Clear, coherent writing with proper grammar
- Logical organization and flow of ideas
- Comprehensive data collection and analysis
- Evidence-based conclusions and recommendations
- Proper citation and referencing throughout

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Incomplete methodology section

- Vague research questions
- Poor data presentation
- Unsupported conclusions
- Inconsistent citation format
- Rushed or careless writing
- Missing ethical considerations
- Inadequate literature review

APPENDICES (Optional)

You may include appendices for:

- Complete data collection instruments (questionnaire, interview guide, observation schedule)
- Detailed statistical outputs
- Transcripts from qualitative data (if applicable)
- Institutional approval letters
- Additional tables or figures
- Supporting documents

Number appendices as: Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

Guidelines for Writing Capstone Project Report

- Page: A4 size
- Font: Times New Roman
- Spacing: 1.5 line spacing
- Margins: 3 cm on all sides
- Justification: Fully justified
- Paragraphs: Use blank lines between paragraphs and sections
- Headings: Use hierarchical heading formatting (Heading 1, 2, etc.)
- Word Count: 6,000 to 8,000 words (excluding annexures)
- Page Numbers: Roman numerals (i, ii...) for preliminary pages, Arabic (1, 2...) from Chapter 1
- Spelling/Grammar: Use MS Word grammar/spell check

Format of Capstone Project Report

- i. Title Page
- ii. Supervisor's Certificate
- iii. Acknowledgements

- iv. Table of Contents
- v. List of Tables & Figures
- vi. Executive Summary
- vii. Chapter 1: Introduction
- viii. Chapter 2: Literature Review
- ix. Chapter 3: Research Methodology
- x. Chapter 4: Data Analysis & Findings
- xi. Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations
- xii. References (APA or Harvard style)
- xiii. Annexures

Contents of the Report (Minimum Requirements)

- i. Introduction (500–700 words): Problem background, objectives, scope
- ii. Literature Review (800–1000 words): Theoretical base, past studies
- iii. Methodology (600–800 words): Research type, tools, sampling, data collection
- iv. Data Analysis (1500–2000 words): Quantitative/qualitative analysis, tables, interpretation
- v. Conclusion & Recommendations (600–800 words): Findings, suggestions, policy implications

General Rules Regarding Capstone Project

1. Every student enrolled in the capstone project must complete it within the allocated semester under the supervision of a faculty member.
2. The responsibility to propose a suitable topic lies with the student. The department will approve or suggest changes to the topic.
3. Upon topic approval, the department will assign a faculty supervisor who will guide the student throughout the project.
4. An online orientation session (minimum 2 hours) will be arranged at the start of the semester to guide students about the objectives, structure, ethics, and report writing of the Capstone Project.
5. Students must follow ethical standards and avoid plagiarism. Projects with over 20% similarity (Turnitin or equivalent) may be rejected or penalized.
6. At the end of the semester, the final capstone project must be submitted in electronic format via LMS for grading.
7. The Department will assign an Evaluator to assess each Capstone Project. The final grade will depend on:
 8. Quality of report
 9. Originality and depth of analysis
 10. Relevance of recommendations
 11. Adherence to structure and format
12. The passing marks for the Capstone Project are 50 out of 100. Failure to meet the minimum score will result in a re-enrolment requirement.
13. Evaluation may be conducted by the supervisor or tutors may be assigned for evaluation, not exceeding 50 students per evaluator.
14. The University holds no financial liability related to any field visits or data collection undertaken by the student.

For further guidance, consult your supervisor or contact the Department of Gender & Women

Studies, AIOU Islamabad.

Good luck with your Capstone Project!

Ms. Mehreen Qaisar

Lecturer/BS Program Coordinator

Email: mehreen.qaisar@aiou.edu.pk

Capstone Project Topic Approval Form Gender & Women Studies 9186

Student Information

- Name: _____
- Student ID: _____
- Degree Program: _____
- Department: _____
- Email: _____
- Contact Number: _____

Project/Supervisor Information

- Proposed Capstone Project Title: _____
- Field/Discipline: _____
- Supervisor Name: _____
- Supervisor Email: _____

Project Topic Details

1. **Brief Description of Proposed Topic (2–4 sentences):**

2. **Problem Statement or Project Purpose:**

3. **Objectives/Aims (list up to three):**

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. **Rationale/Justification for Topic Selection:**

For Faculty Use Only

- Supervisor's Recommendation:
[] Approved

Requires Revision
 Not Approved
Comments (optional):

• Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

• Department Approval (if required):

Approved

Not Approved

Comments:

• Department Chair/Coordinator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Instructions:

Attach this signed Topic Approval Form to your capstone proposal at the time of submission. No research may begin before approval has been granted.

Declaration of Originality Capstone Project BS Gender & Women Studies 9186

Student Information

- Name: _____
- Student ID: _____
- Degree Program: _____
- Department: _____
- Project/Thesis/Report Title: _____

Declaration

I hereby declare that this work is entirely my own original authorship, except where explicit reference is made to the work of others. All sources utilized, quoted, or closely paraphrased in this project/thesis/report have been fully and appropriately acknowledged according to academic standards.

I confirm that:

- This work has not been submitted in whole or part for any other degree, diploma, or qualification at this or any other institution.
- Where material from other sources (including the internet) has been used, it is properly referenced and acknowledged.
- I am fully aware of the institution's policy on plagiarism, and I understand that any violation may result in disciplinary action.

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Supervisor's Certification

I have read the work submitted by this student and, to the best of my knowledge, confirm that it is an original piece of work and meets the academic standards for originality and referencing.

Supervisor's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

*This declaration form should be completed, signed, and submitted with your capstone project, thesis, or research report to meet institutional and ethical requirements.

Capstone Project Submission Form Gender & Women Studies 9186

Student Information

- Name: _____
 - Student ID: _____
 - Degree Program: _____
 - Department: _____
 - Email: _____
 - Contact Number: _____
-

Project Information

- Capstone Project Title: _____
 - Supervisor Name: _____
 - Supervisor Email: _____
 - Organization/Field Site (if any): _____
 - Submission Date: _____
-

Project Report Components Checklist

(Please mark ✓ for each item included)

- Title page
- Supervisor's certificate
- Acknowledgements
- Table of contents
- List of tables/figures
- Executive summary/abstract
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Data Analysis/Findings
- Conclusion and Recommendations
- References (APA/Harvard)

- Annexures/Appendices

Declaration by Student:

I certify that this capstone project is my original work, has not been previously submitted for credit at this or any other institution, and is free from plagiarism. I have followed ethical research guidelines and acknowledge all sources.

Capstone Project Evaluation Proforma Gender & Women Studies 9186

Student Name: _____

Project Title: _____

Department: _____

Supervisor/Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Please assess the capstone project on the following criteria by ticking (✓) the most appropriate option for each:

No.	Assessment Question	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
1	Clarity and relevance of the research problem/objective				
2	Depth and coverage of the literature review				
3	Appropriateness of research design and methodology				
4	Quality and rigor of data analysis (quantitative/qualitative)				
5	Logic of conclusions and relevance of recommendations				
6	Originality and critical thinking in addressing the research question				
7	Adherence to ethical standards (e.g., consent, confidentiality, no plagiarism)				
8	Professional presentation (format, referencing, language, structure)				
9	Quality of oral/project presentation (if applicable)				
10	Overall integration of theory with practical analysis				

Additional Comments/Suggestions:

Evaluator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Typical 4-Point Assessment Choices Interpreted as Percentages

Option	Percentage Range	Interpretation
Excellent	85–100%	Outstanding mastery
Good	70–84%	Consistently strong
Satisfactory	50–69%	Acceptable/pass
Needs Improvement	Below 50%	Not passing

Explanation:

- **Excellent:** Indicates top-level work, well above minimum requirements.
- **Good:** Indicates performance is strong and reliable, with no critical weaknesses.
- **Satisfactory:** Denotes acceptable achievement, just meeting the required standard (50% is the pass mark).
- **Needs Improvement:** Means the work does not meet minimum requirements; score is below passing.

How to use these in a rubric:

- For each question, assign “Excellent” = full marks, “Good” = 75% of marks, “Satisfactory” = 50% of marks, “Needs Improvement” = 0.
- Calculate the total percentage for the full proforma to determine pass/fail and relative merit.