

POL 491 Final Project Guidelines and Rubric

Overview

The final project for this course is the creation of a **policy analysis, campaign action plan, and professional reflection capstone**.

As the final stop in your journey toward your Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, you will complete a capstone that will allow you to demonstrate the knowledge and experience you have gained during your time at SNHU. Over the course of the term, you will immerse yourself in integrating what you have learned in your coursework and practice to create an authentic demonstration of your abilities to work in the political arena. You will create an audience-targeted policy analysis that will inform the creation of a campaign action plan.

The policy analysis and campaign action plan will serve as evidence and documentation of your ability to address a pressing contemporary issue and communicate it to interested stakeholders. They will also highlight the various types of creative expression and skills learned while studying political science at SNHU. Think of this assessment as a cornerstone of your professional identity that can be considered a representation of the skills and abilities you bring to a potential employer. This assessment could be used as an artifact while seeking new opportunities in which you can present your research to interested stakeholders and have a positive reception. For this reason, you are tasked with devising a well-rounded, authentic campaign action plan that is worthy of implementation. In addition, you will also reflect on your journey through the political science program and how you plan to position yourself professionally.

The project is divided into **three milestones**, which will be submitted at various points throughout the course to scaffold learning and ensure quality final submissions. These milestones will be submitted in **Modules Two, Three, and Five**. **The final submission will occur in Module Seven.**

In this assignment, you will demonstrate your mastery of the following course outcomes:

- Differentiate among key components of diverse political systems and external agencies for efficacy in a global society
- Apply social scientific reasoning, theories, concepts, and methodologies to the analysis of a wide range of contemporary and historical political issues and problems using effective statistical research and analysis
- Apply effective research literacy strategies in hypothesis testing and academic research for political science by identifying, analyzing, and integrating appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Demonstrate appropriate oral and written communication strategies toward specific political audiences for effective, solution-oriented decision making
- Demonstrate an empathetic and ethical viewpoint using civic discourse that promotes active citizenship and engagement in public service

Prompt

Working individually and with feedback from your instructor, you will identify, research, and analyze a social issue or problem that needs legislative reform and would benefit from a campaign action plan. You will build this campaign throughout the term, completing various milestone assignments, meeting deadlines, and refining your plan.

You will first create an insightful, audience-targeted policy analysis. Your analysis should include a well-thought-out original thesis that argues for the policy resolution of an issue or problem at the federal level. Your analysis should be directed to a particular audience that has some stake in the outcome of the policy (i.e., officials, lawmakers, practitioners, donors, etc.), as policy analyses often require a consideration of how to devise recommendations that resolve the issue for that particular audience.

Your instructor will be available to brainstorm ideas and act as an advisor throughout this process. You will additionally participate in discussion topic peer review sessions, providing feedback to your classmates and receiving feedback on your project.

Your policy analysis will then be used to inform the creation of an achievable and creative campaign action plan in which you must address the key aspects and considerations needed to create a successful campaign. Finally, you will have the opportunity to self-assess and reflect on your capstone experience by drawing connections to your academic program and apply what you have learned to your future academic and/or professional life.

Evaluation of Capstone: This capstone will be assessed somewhat differently than other courses you have taken online at SNHU. There are three separate components, which will be submitted at different times during the course; however, they all operate together to comprise the whole capstone experience and *are not* assessed separately. You will be evaluated on all three of them as a unit in determining whether you have achieved proficiency in each outcome. Your instructor will guide you through this process, keeping a running narrative of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the outcomes as you progress through the class. Your work is expected to meet the highest professional standards. Remember, you are selling yourself as much as you are selling your ideas.

Capstone Component One: Policy Analysis

For the first of three capstone components, you will develop a professional policy analysis that should include the following sections. Again, it is important to keep your target audience in mind by including only the essential facts that your audience needs to know to understand the context of the policy. In other words, be sure to filter information on behalf of your audience. Target audiences may include, but are not limited to, public officials or lawmakers, donors, activists, and interest groups. Often, these types of audiences have a limited amount of time to make practical decisions, so a direct approach is best.

1. *Define the Problem:* You should not only identify a specific issue and articulate why it is important, but also establish a set of criteria for evaluating the problem in question.
2. *Develop a Thesis:* Develop a well-thought-out thesis that will underline why and how the problem needs to be addressed by policy alternatives.
3. *Review the Topic:* Once the topic and thesis have been established, provide a review of the literature and an evaluative review of current polls about the topic, using both primary and secondary sources.

4. *Alternatives and Recommendation:* Based on your thesis, what should the main policy be for addressing the problem? Based on your analysis of a set of alternatives, recommend a policy action and articulate reasons, supported by facts and evidence, why the policy proposal you have chosen would be the best avenue to address the issue in question.

Capstone Component Two: Campaign Action Plan

Based on your policy analysis, what is your plan of action to achieve a successful campaign for implementing the recommendations? This component of the capstone should include the following sections:

1. *Key Aspects of the Campaign:* Provide a comprehensive overview of the key aspects of a successful campaign. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - A. Engaging stakeholders
 - B. Persuading lawmakers to vote in support of your measure
 - C. Engaging and using media to your advantage
 - D. Addressing potential challenges or anticipated problems
 - E. Implementing grassroots advocacy efforts
 - F. Researching and accessing available funding
 - G. Executing effective messaging strategies and techniques
2. *Strategies:* Once you have defined the key aspects of the campaign, what are the best strategies to achieve your intended outcome? What are your recommendations for addressing the key aspects of the campaign, ensuring that the campaign is successful?
3. *Expected Outcomes:* Based on your understanding of strategies, what results do you expect out of this plan?

Capstone Component Three: Professional Reflection Capstone

For the final component of this capstone, you have the opportunity to reveal and discuss your thoughts about the process and outcomes of this project and your overall political science degree journey and experiences. Writing reflectively allows you to think deeply and consciously about your experiences. Your ability to self-assess specific areas in the field of political science that are of particular importance to you and to articulate your goals and plans is invaluable to successful practice.

You should envision this component as a personal reflection on the capstone and your experience in the political science program as a whole. For instance, relative to the capstone, you could discuss what you did (or intended to do) and then consider what worked well, what challenges you faced, and what you would change or do differently to make your experience better. In reflecting on your time here at SNHU, you might discuss where you started, where you have ended up, where you see yourself going, and so on. Note that this component is not about evaluating the capstone itself, but rather your experience within the capstone project.

Some of the issues that you could address in this final component of this capstone may include the following:

- Overall, what was your capstone experience like?
- Reflect on the significance of the capstone in relation to your own experience at SNHU.
- What connections do you see between your capstone and your academic program?
- How will you apply what you have learned to your future academic or professional life?

Altogether, this report should be submitted in a professional and visually pleasing format. Consider your use of images, charts, and tables. You should consider a minimum of eight scholarly resources. The final report should be in the range of 16–18 pages. In the “real world,” there are usually not any page length requirements. Therefore, the 16 to 18 page range is a suggestion, and you should use your best professional judgment regarding the length of your report.

Milestones

Milestone One: Literature Review

In **Module Two**, you will submit the policy you wish to study in your research through a literature review. It should be 2–3 pages in length (excluding title and reference pages), formatted according to APA style, and include at least five scholarly sources. **This milestone will be graded with the Literature Review Rubric.**

Milestone Two: Policy Analysis Rough Draft

In **Module Three**, you will submit your **policy analysis rough draft**. Your rough draft should be 6–8 pages in length (excluding title and reference pages), formatted according to APA style, and include at least five resources that you will use in writing your final paper. The rough draft will include the same elements as the final paper, but will not go into as much detail. **This milestone will be graded with the Policy Analysis Rough Draft Rubric.**

Milestone Three: Campaign Action Plan Rough Draft

In **Module Five**, you will submit your **campaign action plan rough draft**. Your rough draft should be 6–8 pages in length (excluding title and reference pages), formatted according to APA style, and include at least three resources that you will use in writing your final paper. The rough draft will include the same elements as the final paper, but will not go into as much detail. **This milestone will be graded with the Campaign Action Plan Rough Draft Rubric.**

Final Submission: Policy Analysis, Campaign Action Plan, and Professional Reflection Capstone

In **Module Seven**, you will submit your **final project for this course**, including a policy analysis, campaign action plan, and professional reflection capstone. It should be a complete, polished artifact containing **all** of the critical elements of the final product. It should reflect the incorporation of feedback gained throughout the course. **This submission will be graded with the Final Project Rubric.**

Deliverables

| Milestone | Deliverables | Module Due | Grading |
|-----------|---|------------|--|
| One | Literature Review | Two | Graded separately; Literature Review Rubric |
| Two | Policy Analysis Rough Draft | Three | Graded separately; Policy Analysis Rough Draft Rubric |
| Three | Campaign Action Plan Rough Draft | Five | Graded separately; Campaign Action Plan Rough Draft Rubric |
| | Final Submission: Policy Analysis, Campaign Action Plan, and Professional Reflection Capstone | Seven | Graded separately; Final Project Rubric |

Final Project Rubric

Guidelines for Submission: Written components of the project must follow these formatting guidelines when applicable: double spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, and discipline-appropriate citations. The final document should be 16–18 pages, in addition to a cover page and a reference page, written in APA format, with at least eight references.

This rubric will be applied to all components as a whole and no component will be assessed on its own.

The “Possible Indicators of Success” are examples for you and the instructor of the types of concepts to look for to demonstrate proficiency. They are neither exhaustive nor proscriptive and should be used as guides for illustrating how your capstone embodies the outcome. All outcomes are weighted equally.

| POL 491-01: Differentiate among key components of diverse political systems and external agencies for efficacy in a global society | Proficient 100% | Not Proficient 0% |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Possible Indicators of Success</i> | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student’s ability to differentiate and choose various political actors that have a stake in this issue? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student’s ability to evaluate and justify the chosen focus or strategies in running a successful campaign? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student’s ability to differentiate and justify successful campaign strategies, working to engage various political systems and external agencies? | | |
| POL 491-02: Apply social scientific reasoning, theories, concepts, and methodologies to the analysis of a wide range of contemporary and historical political issues and problems using effective statistical research and analysis | Proficient 100% | Not Proficient 0% |
| <i>Possible Indicators of Success</i> | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student’s ability to apply theories and methodologies to the analysis of the issue? | | |

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|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to articulate the importance of the issue, while also illustrating an effective resolution of the problem in question? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to apply and synthesize existing research and theories that comprehensively analyze and evaluate the issue? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to apply scientific reasoning for the creation of policy measures that could potentially resolve the issue? | | |
| Does the analysis of the issue provide a solid foundation for identifying and constructing the best policy needed to address the issue? | | |
| POL 491-03: Apply effective research literacy strategies in hypothesis testing and academic research for political science by identifying, analyzing, and integrating appropriate primary and secondary sources | Proficient 100% | Not Proficient 0% |
| <i>Possible Indicators of Success</i> | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to comprehensively analyze and evaluate the issue for developing a well-thought-out thesis? In turn, does the thesis effectively justify why the selected issue needs to be addressed by advocating for policy alternatives? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to analyze, synthesize, and integrate existing research, ultimately placing the issue within a broader historical context? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to identify reliable sources? If the sources are "unreliable," is that taken into consideration? Does the research inform decisions when necessary? | | |
| POL 491-04: Demonstrate appropriate oral and written communication strategies toward specific political audiences for effective, solution-oriented decision making | Proficient 100% | Not Proficient 0% |
| <i>Possible Indicators of Success</i> | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to conduct a professional policy analysis with a specific political audience in mind? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to create a strong, realistic campaign plan that is worthy of implementation? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to convince an audience that proposed policy alternatives are necessary? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's professional and personal integrity by properly using citations, avoiding plagiarism, and submitting new and original work? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to problem-solve in decision-making situations and roles? | | |
| POL 491-05: Demonstrate an empathetic and ethical viewpoint using civic discourse that promotes active citizenship and engagement in public service | Proficient 100% | Not Proficient 0% |
| <i>Possible Indicators of Success</i> | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's empathetic and ethical viewpoints when promoting civic discourse in the policy analysis? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to take a stand on an issue and provide supporting evidence in recommending a course of action? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's ability to assess the capstone experience for its application to future academic and/or professional life? | | |
| Does the quality of the capstone position the student for future engagement in public service? | | |
| Does the capstone demonstrate the student's empathetic and ethical viewpoints when promoting active citizenship and advocacy? | | |