Overview

The **FINAL PROJECT** is evidence of the graduate student's ability to carry out independent investigation and to present the results in clear and systematic form. The following is a guide for the preparation, submission, and acceptance of your Master's final project to the School of Business. It should be noted that the final responsibility for the project is the student's and the College does reserve the right to refuse any manuscript that does not follow the proper formatting procedures.

There are **TWO Parts** to these guidelines.

1. **Part A** lists the essential requirements that must be met in order to submit to the School of Business a final project that can be evaluated and graded as an element of the final project needed to pass your capstone course.

2. **Part B** consists of helpful guidelines and answers to frequently asked questions about the Final Project process.
PART A

The Report
This section discusses the entire contents of the Final Project: defining its purpose and indicating the level of detail, sophistication, and style of report writing needed for academic documents of this type. Remember, a Final Project can still be written and be of value even if its hypotheses are not confirmed.

A research project is considered sound if:
• The report is well organized flowing logically and smoothly, contains appropriate headings and subheadings, and has a professional look.
• The literature review is current and relevant.
• It includes a substantial original component.
• It makes a contribution to the body of knowledge in the field.
• The project's limitations and scope for further research are clearly identified.

A poor final project lacks specific recommendations, containing only observations that are broad or general with no specific guidance as to how to implement it. On the other hand, a strong final project clearly presents its original problem, research approach, findings, analysis, interpretations, conclusions and clear recommendations.

The style of your writing should be scholarly, using proper citation format, and emulate the style of the literature you review. The use of colloquialisms and slang is unacceptable. In addition, the use of the first person should be avoided. The composer of the document should refer to him/herself as “the author.”

Content and Quality
It is important to consider the following expectations around the level, scope and quality of work for a graduate-level final project.

This project should demonstrate a high level of critical thinking that is the crowning achievement of the master’s program. This is NOT simply a longer version of an undergraduate term paper or final class paper. A graduate-level final project should meet several minimum requirements.

1. It should clearly demonstrate the student's ability to think deeply and critically about the topic in question. It is expected that one will evaluate the quality of the information gathered and draw one’s own independent conclusions based on research. There should be significant evidence of original thought.

2. The document should be built around what is traditionally called a "problem statement" - something that goes beyond broad generalities. The statement should take a specific stance on
an issue that the paper then sets out to confirm or refute. Addressing controversial topics or new ideas is strongly encouraged. It should be well-defined and clear what the writer's goal, position, conclusions and recommendations are.

3. At the graduate level, a quality paper should advance the state of knowledge in the discipline and provide value to practitioners in the field. For example, as a result of reading this paper, how can I become a more effective leader and increase the value of Finance, Marketing, HR, etc. to my business?

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism — using other people’s words and ideas without acknowledging where you got them — is regarded as an extremely serious violation of academic standards.

Remember that anything not correctly sourced, citing the original author, is assumed to be your own work. If it turns out that it isn’t then you will be guilty of plagiarism. The burden of proof of originality lies with you, the author.

Make sure your references are recorded in accepted academic format (APA strongly preferred) and the author(s) and source(s) of any work that is not his or her own are clearly identified and cited.

Plagiarism is a serious offense that could result in a student failing the course, and even being expelled from the program. You are responsible for reading, understanding, and fully complying with the Manhattanville College School of Business policy on Plagiarism available in the Manhattanville College School of Business policy Student Reference Guide.

**General Requirements**

1. All final projects should adequately cover the intended subject matter and demonstrate the capacity to perform graduate level research. The final project that is submitted must be well organized and clearly and logically written.

2. The ability to write in graduate level English is a requirement for your research project, which must be written in a formal research style. Check spelling, grammar and punctuation carefully. Use the spell check and grammar functions on your computer, but do not rely on them exclusively. If there are obvious spelling errors or grammatical errors, the readers will suspect that you did not invest much time in quality control, and they will not waste time in carefully reading your paper. This type of paper usually gets an immediate rejection from the evaluators.

3. The body (Chapters 1-5) of a TYPICAL Final Project is 30 pages long. Papers can contain as few as 25 pages or as many as 40 pages (excluding References) depending on the nature of the subject matter and research methodology (quantitative vs. qualitative). Papers less than 25 pages will not be accepted.

4. The final project must use 1.5 or double spacing.
5. Font for the regular text in the body of the paper should be 12 pt. Times New Roman. Character size shall not be less than 8 pt.
6. The size of paper used for a final project shall be US Letter (8.5" x 11") or, in certain exceptional cases, international A4 (297mm x 210mm).
7. The margins at the binding edges left side should be 1.5" (40mm) and other margins not less than 0.75" (20mm). Pages should be numbered consecutively throughout the final project, commencing with the Table of Contents, including appendices, but excluding photographs or diagrams not embodied in the text. The Title Page is not numbered.

**Organization of Material**

This section outlines the headings and contents of the main chapters that constitute an original final project. This helps you plan and formulate research concepts, data collection, analysis, and interpretation in your mind, so that you have an idea of what the finished project should look like. The report should be organized under appropriate headings and subheads as indicated by the guidelines that follow.

1. **INTRODUCTORY Pages**

A) **The TITLE PAGE** should have a well-balanced appearance and shall give the following information in the order listed:
   - The full title of the final project, as approved by the Program Director. It should describe the contents accurately and concisely.
   - The author’s full name.
   - The degree for which the final project is submitted.
   - The Manhattanville School of Business as the degree-granting institution, including the semester and year of submission (e.g. Fall 2017).
   - Space for signatures by the Program Director and Dean.

B) **The TABLE of CONTENTS** should follow the title page and list the chapters, their main sections and subsections with the number of the page on which each begins. It is not advisable to list subsections lower than the third level (i.e. 2.1.1.x) in the table of contents. The page numbers should appear on the lower right.

C) **The TABLE of TABLES** should be listed before figures, etc., and their numbers must relate to the way in which they appear and are captioned in the research project. See this section for more information on dealing with the numbering of tables, figures, charts, and illustrations.

D) If you wish to include a **DEDICATION** it would immediately follow the Table of Contents or Table of Tables.

E) If you wish to thank specific people who have really gone the extra mile to help you produce your final project you may insert an **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** page here.
F) Next, there should be a DECLARATION page containing the following statement: “I grant powers of discretion to the Department, the School of Business, and Manhattanville College to allow this final project to be copied in part or in whole without further reference to me. This permission covers only copies made for study purposes or for inclusion in Department, School of Business, and Manhattanville College research publications, subject to normal conditions of acknowledgement.”

G) The ABSTRACT should follow. An abstract is NOT an introduction (that would be Chapter 1, but rather lets readers know what they can expect (main points and conclusions, methods, data, analysis) in the order in which they are presented in the final project. The goal is to provide future researchers with a concise expression of the purpose, scope, findings, conclusions and recommendations of your Final Project.

*The abstract should be written in a readable style rather than in bullet or note form. Its suitable length is about 150 words, single-spaced.*

H) After the abstract, if you have used any abbreviations or symbols, the key should be listed with explanations in tabular form. A GLOSSARY of TERMS would also appear here.

2. **BODY of the Final Project**

Although there can be no rigid rules for the layout of the text, a carefully planned structure make the writing process less daunting and helps you include all your material in the right places without unnecessary repetition.

The final project shall be divided as appropriate into chapters, sections, and subsections.

Chapter headings should be short and to the point. Chapters are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc.; main sub-sections of Chapter 1 are numbered 1.1., 1.2, etc., and any further subdivisions 1.1.1, etc. Illustrations, graphs, and tables can then be numbered correspondingly to show their relation to the text.

**Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION (typically 4 to 6 pages)**

The text of the final project shall begin with an introduction defining the relation of the final project to other work in the same field and referring to any findings, propositions, or new discoveries contained in the research project and to any important points about sources, methods, and techniques. It should contain:

1. An introduction to both the final project in general and (as with every subsequent chapter) specifically this chapter.
2. Introduction to the research topic in general.
3. Background and purpose of research.
4. Reasons for carrying out research on this topic.
5. Goals and objectives of the research.
6. Problem definition.
7. Propositions to be examined or tested.
8. The importance of the research to be performed.

Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW (typically 6 to 8 pages)
This is often the first chapter to be actually written. Sometimes it is very hard to write Chapter 1 first because it is difficult to introduce something when you don’t quite know what it is just yet.

Chapter 2 encapsulates and describes the outcomes of your literature search. Because there are differences in literature (depending on the topic being researched), it is likely that the major section headings will differ greatly from one final project to another. This chapter should contain a comprehensive survey, review and assessment of all the significant literature on your topic. It should convince the reader that you have thoroughly examined material written previously in multiple sources (books, journals, periodicals, electronic resources) and that you have a clear understanding of the major issues in the field.

When researching literature, it is important to use and reference scholarly work and reputable journals, books and publications, e.g. Journal of Finance, Strategic Management Journal, Harvard Business Review, Standard and Poor’s, Wall Street Journal, Forbes, etc.

In the course of your work it may be necessary to use large datasets for your research. Use reputable data sources such as US Census Bureau, Bloomberg, Reuters, Yahoo Finance, Factset, CRSP Booth School of Business, statistical service of the Federal Reserve Banking system and properly reference them.

Examples of questionable, unreliable and or unreliable sources that discredit your work: blogs, activist websites, Wikipedia, newspaper opinion pages, quotes in the press by various popular figures without scholarly credentials such as movie stars, TV show hosts, writers, highly unique or personal experiences by select individuals such as friends and family, etc.

Chapter 3 –RESEARCH APPROACH (typically 3 to 5 pages)
This chapter deals with the research approach, final project statement, list of hypotheses, the way in which data was obtained, and the various elements of research methodology. In this chapter, comment on the reliability and validity of the data and explain how the population for the study was determined. It will be important to distinguish between secondary research (material developed by other authors) and primary research (that you have personally developed). Final Projects that include primary research are encouraged.

Chapter 4 – RESULTS/Observations/Analysis/Interpretation (typically 6 to 8 pages).
Depending on the research you did, the chapter title utilizes one, some or all of the words above. This is the “substance” of the final project in which you will talk about how you took your research and put it into a meaningful, applied context. This is the most subjective of all the chapters in that it allows and encourages the author to express his/her own opinions by way of a presentation, analysis, and discussion of observations and results. The key component of this
Chapter 5 – CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS (typically 6 to 8 pages)

This chapter has specific sections. All sections must be presented and included in the following order:

- **Conclusions**: Bring together and state the main findings and their significance, present conclusions that can be drawn from the entire body of work. Convince the reader that all the goals and objectives set forth in Chapter 1 were met or if not, state why.

- **Recommendations**: State what recommendations you would like to make based on your research and findings, and which hypotheses were proven. These recommendations should not be broad generalizations. They should be specific and actionable by practitioners in the field.

- **Summary**: A comprehensive summary of the entire paper.

- **Originality**: A paragraph that contains a specific statement about what was original about your work and why. This may include original research you have done or information you have developed as an experienced practitioner in the relevant field.

- **Contribution to the Body of Knowledge in the Field**: A section that contains, among other things, specific statement about how your research makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field; who might benefit from it and why.

- **Limitations**: List and discuss your research limitations. Make sure the reader does not draw any false conclusions about the internal and external validity of your work. For example, this could be a new or emerging issue about which extensive research has yet to be conducted. Note that your individual contribution may be more valuable in such a case.

- **Scope for Future Research**: Discuss what future research might be conducted to resolve the limitations you previously mentioned and how, make suggestions for future research on the topic.

3. **Presentation of REFERENCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- References are those sources (written or unwritten) that were consulted in the course of the research and which are actually referred to in the text.

- A bibliography contains items or documents that were useful to you in formulating your ideas or that expand or develop the ideas you present, but are not necessarily referred to in the text.

- References and bibliography can be listed separately or presented in one sequence labeled “References and bibliography.” The main requirements of any bibliography or list of references are that it should contain sufficient information to enable the reader to obtain the documents without further checking and that the items should be accurately
and consistently presented using a standard format. Please note that the APA method is strongly preferred.

- References should be set up using APA (or MLA) guidelines.

4. **Appendices**

Any material that would interrupt the flow and or continuity of the narrative in the body of the final project should be included in the appendix. Examples: Questionnaires, surveys, sets of raw data, additional information that is not directly relevant but that might interest the reader.

5. **Tables, Figures, Charts, and Illustrations**

All of these should have a binding margin of at least 1.5" (40mm) and, if possible, be placed in the final project near the appropriate text. Each number of an illustration, figure or table should incorporate the number of the chapter in which it is bound, e.g. the third figure appearing in Chapter 4 should be numbered "Figure 4-3." **Captions of tables** (note the difference between a table and a figure) must be placed at the **top** of the table. **Captions of figures** must be placed at the **bottom** of the figure. The top of an illustration or table that is bound sideways shall be to the left of the page. The word 'Figure' must be written in full (not abbreviated), and the 'f' must be capitalized, for example: Figure 5-1.

ANY illustrations, graphs, figures, or tables reproduced from another source must be precisely referenced. If a figure or a table is redrawn or otherwise altered, you should acknowledge the source and indicate the extent to which it was used, as in the following examples: "Adapted from Hudson" [Implies minimal alteration]. If you created your own figure, illustration or table it is a good idea to mention that in the body of the text. The reader should know about your original contributions and efforts! For example, “Figure 3-2 was developed by the researcher to illustrate the significance of ....”
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**When should I first begin thinking about my Final Project?**

It is *never* too soon to begin thinking about your Final Project. As you are taking courses you may find a topic that is of particular interest to you. However, it is suggested you give serious thought to a potential topic upon completion of 6 courses or 18 credits.

**When should I begin my Final Project?**

You should begin your final project two terms prior to your expected graduation and/or program completion date.

If you plan to graduate in SPRING (May), you should register and begin your Final Project by, or before, the WINTER Module allowing you to have an additional term in the event you are unable to complete your Final Project in one term.

NOTE: In the event you are unable to complete and submit your final project in the term you are registered in, you must request a grade deferral (CONTRACT for an INCOMPLETE) subject to approval with a completion DUE date. The granting of a GD is NOT automatic and is usually approved only in exceptional circumstances. Consult with your Program Director if you think you might require a GD.

**Will I have a Final Project ADVISOR?**

You will have a Final Project Advisor who will either be a faculty member or program director. Consult with your program director on the process.

While you primarily work *independently* on the Final Project, the role of your Final Project Advisor is to offer you general assistance in developing a topic and problem statement, research guidance, to provide direction, to guide you through the challenges you might encounter, to assess the progress of your work and finally to evaluate your completed final project and presentation.

If you wish to have a particular faculty member as your final project advisor, consult with your program director on the process. Make sure you are prepared with a potential research topic in your area of interest and the name of a faculty advisor with whom you would like to work. Please be advised that nobody is required to take on the role of final project advisor so it is a good idea to have a backup person in case your first choice declines.

**Does the School of Business offer any final project guidance to help me get started?**

Yes, the School of Business offers a **Final Project SEMINAR** several times a year, typically in the SUMMER, FALL and WINTER Terms. Check well ahead of time with your Program Director. There are two separate components offered on different dates. One focuses on how to select an appropriate topic and create a compelling thesis or problem statement. The second
focuses on how to conduct effective research as well the proper formats for citing references. Upon completion of the final project seminar, students will prepare and submit a Final Project PROPOSAL to be reviewed by program director and/or faculty advisor.

**Other than the final project seminar, are there any other resources available to help me with the Final Project?**

Resources include the library providing research consultation assistance, where there are available copies of submitted final projects, and the Writing Center offering day and evening writing assistance, on a walk-in basis, in the Learning Commons of the Manhattanville Library.

In addition, while students independently work on their final project, there is a Writing Fellow often available to the School of Business offering assistance exclusively to graduate students to guide them to the writing process (i.e., structure and clarity). If you are interested, please check with your Program Director regarding availability.

**CLICK** on the follow link to access the complete LIBRARY RESOURCE GUIDE:
http://mville.libguides.com/content.php?pid=35317

**CLICK** on the following link to request a REFERENCE CONSULTATION with a LIBRARIAN:
https://www.mville.edu/undergraduate/academics/library/research-assistance/researchconsultation-request.html

**CLICK** on the follow link for information on the WRITING CENTER:
http://www.mville.edu/undergraduate/academics/majors/academic-writing/writing-desk.html

**Does my Final Project Topic require APPROVAL?**
Yes, the Final Project Topic requires approval from your faculty advisor or program director.

**If I do not complete and submit the Final Project but have completed all the Program CORE courses and ELECTIVES, would I be able to still graduate?**
No. You are required to submit your written final project, present it and receive a GRADE in order to be eligible to graduate. In order to be accepted for a grading, an electronic copy of your Final Project must be submitted to the Program Director by the dates listed below at the LATEST. If you miss the deadline, your Final Project will not be eligible for grading until the following semester, which will in turn defer graduation. Presentation dates should be discussed and scheduled with your Program Director.

Once you have received a passing grade for your Final Project your Program Director will give you the go-ahead to submit an electronic copy.
The following are the approximate final submission due dates by term. Note these may vary slightly depending on the calendar for the particular year.

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<td>January 15th</td>
<td>April 2nd</td>
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**NOTE:** If the deadline falls on a weekend then it is moved to the following Monday