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General Information

The Capstone Project or Thesis is the culminating academic experience for the MS in Nutrition graduate program. The scope and presentation of the Capstone Project / Thesis must demonstrate the student’s skills in a variety of areas including, formal academic and technical writing, the research process, and the application of nutrition principles in the public health arena.

MS students must complete a Capstone Project or Thesis reflective of at least 3 credit hours to meet graduation requirements. Elective credit hours may be applied to the Capstone Project / Thesis for more in-depth study of the selected area. Although the goals of both a project and a thesis are similar, the processes, formats, and topics differ. The differences are briefly described below.

Capstone Project

The Capstone Project must demonstrate your mastery of nutrition skills and concepts. The Capstone Project proposal requires approval from the student’s Capstone Project advisor, who may be a different faculty member than the student’s primary Department of Nutrition and Dietetics advisor.

The final Capstone Project document is submitted to members of a Capstone Project Committee for final approval. The Capstone Project is appropriate for students whose interest is not inline with the traditional basic research required for the Thesis option.

Thesis

Students who choose the Thesis option will design original research to answer specific questions and to synthesize new information contributing to the understanding and solution of nutrition problems.

The final Thesis document will be publically available through the Idaho State University Electronic Theses and Dissertations repository. The thesis can be submitted in article form for publication in academic journals or presented at a professional meeting as a poster or oral presentation.

The Thesis option is appropriate for students who intend to further their academic career by pursuing a doctoral degree, those who plan to pursue a career in a basic research setting, and/or those who want more experience in research methods.
Capstone Project

Capstone Projects allow students to apply nutrition skills and concepts and further develop competencies essential to dietetics practice. Project topics and formats are varied and allow students the flexibility to investigate salient nutrition topics under the guidance of their Capstone Project committee chair—usually also serves as the Capstone Project advisor. Many students take advantage of the opportunity to dovetail a work project.

Examples of formats or designs for the Capstone Project are detailed below. Other Capstone Project options that are not listed below are possible. However, these alternative formats must be approved by the student’s Capstone Committee Chair and faculty advisor.

Examples of Capstone Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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| Grant Writing and Submission  | • Identify, write, and submit a grant application for a nutrition-related initiative  
• Final document includes a copy of the written grant application (various narrative parts and the proposed budget)  
• Oral defense includes overview of the grant application process, as well as the proposed initiative |
| Data Analysis                 | • Secondary analysis of existing dataset, such as NHANES  
• Final document includes research question, methodology followed, findings and implications of those findings for practice  
• Oral defense includes overview of the final document |
| Mini-research Project         | • Conceptualize research question, collect data, and analyze findings  
• Final document includes research question, methodology followed, findings and implications of those findings for practice  
• Oral defense includes overview of the final document |
| Literature Review             | • Analysis of the peer-reviewed literature on an important public health nutrition problem, employing the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ Evidence Analysis Library/Center protocol for reviewing and grading the literature  
• Final document may be a manuscript or poster  
• Oral defense includes overview of literature review process, as well as the key findings |
| Interprofessional Care Model  | • Analysis of role of RDN on interprofessional health care team for specific nutrition intervention  
• Final document may be a manuscript or poster  
• Oral defense includes overview of literature review process, as well as the key findings |
| Program Evaluation Plan       | • Development of an evaluation plan of an existing public health nutrition program  
• Final document must include data collection instructions and protocols, and analytical guidelines  
• Oral defense includes overview of program evaluation, as well as key findings |
| Policy Analysis               | • Analysis of the nutrition implications of a current or proposed state or federal legislation or policy (e.g., reimbursement for RDN services)  
• Final document must include perspectives on economics and financing, need and demand, politics/ethics/law, or quality/effectiveness  
• Oral defense includes overview of policy development process, as well as key findings |
General Steps

**Capstone Project Identification**
Students are encouraged to think about a potential focus for their Capstone Project as soon as they are enrolled in the MS in Nutrition program. This strategy lets you begin to do some legwork for the Capstone Project. For example, you might select topics for papers you do for other courses that are related to your Capstone Project.

Not sure what topic to focus on? Your academic advisor and other faculty in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics are good sounding boards for potential topics.

**Formation of Capstone Project Committee**
See the information below on the formation of Capstone Project Committee. Ideally, you will have your committee selected before presenting your proposed Capstone Project topic for approval.

**Topic Approval**
Full-time students must select a Capstone Project topic no later than the end of the first semester of the coursework. Part-time students should work with their faculty advisor to establish a timeline for selecting the Capstone Project topic. The student will complete the Capstone Project Topic Approval Form and submit the completed form to the Capstone Project Committee Chair for approval at the end of the first semester of coursework.

Occasionally, the Capstone Committee Chair will require the student to coordinate a Capstone Project Committee meeting to discuss the topic prior to granting approval. In this scenario, the student is responsible for coordinating the meeting. It is recommended that the student use Doodle or similar scheduling software to identify a day and time that is good with all Capstone Project Committee members.

**Human Subjects Training**
If your Capstone Project includes human study participants, you must complete human subject training through the ISU Office of Research Integrity. The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) is a web-based training program that addresses research with human subjects. This training will also explain additional steps you'll need to take to gain approval for conducting your research. CITI training is included as a mandatory assignment in the NTD 6640 Research, Writing and Grantsmanship course.

**Institutional Review Board Application**
In addition to completing CITI training, if the proposed Capstone Project involves human subjects, the student must submit an “Application to Involve Human Subjects in Research” or a “Certificate of Exemption Request” to the ISU Human Subjects Committee before data can be accessed, collected, and/or analyzed.

Information about the submission of proposals to the HSC can be found on their website (http://isuresearch.org/institutional-reviewboard-irb-also-known-as-human-subjects-committee).

An online platform named Cayuse is used to submit and manage HSC proposals.

**Project Proposal Development**
After the Capstone Project topic has been approved, the student is allowed to register for Capstone Project credits. The scope of the Capstone Project must be equivalent to at least 3 credit hours.

Students wishing to do a more in-depth Capstone Project should talk with their faculty advisor about dedicating additional elective credit hours towards their Capstone Project.

The Capstone Project proposal will be developed under the guidance of the Capstone Project Committee chair and will be distributed to the other Capstone Project Committee members for additional feedback.
The Capstone Project proposal must be approved by the Capstone Project Committee Chair before the project can begin.

**Final Project Document and Oral Defense**

Capstone Project implementation and preparation of the final project document will be completed by the student under the guidance of the Capstone Project Committee Chair. For more information about the expectations, carefully review the:

- Capstone Project and Paper Guidelines
- Capstone Expectations and Grading Rubric
- Capstone and Defense Schedule Checklist

After the final project document is completed, the student will present an overview of the project to the Capstone Project Committee for approval. The student will send the final project document to all Capstone Project Committee members at least two weeks before the project defense date and will coordinate a meeting to present it orally.

The defense takes about 1 ½ to 2 hours. This includes:

- Introductory remarks by the Capstone Project Committee Chair: 5 minutes
- Candidate presentation: A 30 to 45-minute presentation is expected
- Capstone Project Committee questions and discussion with candidate: about 20 minutes
- Capstone Project Committee vote (candidate steps out of the room): 5-10 minutes for the committee to discuss and vote on whether the student passes
- Report on committee vote and final remarks by Capstone Project Committee: 5-10 minutes

**Formation of the Capstone Project Committee**

The Capstone Project Committee needs to be formalized when the student files the Final Program of Study.

The Capstone Project Committee consists of three faculty members. All members of the Capstone Project Committee approve the final project document and oversee the final oral defense of the capstone project.

**Project Committee Chair**

The Capstone Project Committee Chair is selected by the student under the guidance of the academic advisor. **The Chair must be a faculty member of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics.** The Capstone Project Committee Chair guides the student through the project proposal development. The Capstone Project Chair and the third member must have Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) status.

**Second Project Committee Member**

The second project committee member is selected by the student under the guidance of the project committee chair from faculty members in KDHS with a background in nutrition and dietetics, public health, and/or health education. If an individual from the community is selected, their resume/CV must be submitted to the Graduate School for review and approval. Once the student obtains the resume/CV, their Committee Chair will submit the required paperwork to the Graduate school.

**Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR)**

The GFR is selected by the student under the guidance of the project committee chair from faculty
members outside of KDHS. Alternatively, s/he can be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School.

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<th>Responsibilities of Involved Parties</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develops the project proposal and final project document under the guidance of the project committee chair</td>
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<td>• Coordinates with project committee members on the date, time and place of oral defense meetings</td>
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<td>• Distributes final project document to all committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Committee Chair</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provides assistance and direction to the student during the project proposal development and final project preparation</td>
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<td>• Ensures that the project proposal and final project conform to the guidelines of the Graduate School and the Division of Health Sciences</td>
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<td>• Conducts the final project defense meeting</td>
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<td>• Informs the student of the results of the final project defense and any recommendations from the committee</td>
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<td>• Brings laptop to the defense and submits vote immediately following defense, using Qualtrics survey link provided by the Graduate school for the student</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Informs the Chair of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics of the results of the final project defense</td>
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<td>• Submits a change of grade form to the Graduate School to remove incomplete status (IP) of project credits and to document satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) completion of project</td>
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<td><strong>Second Project Committee Member</strong></td>
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<td>• Participates in the development of the project and provides feedback as requested, and is expected to attend all meetings of the total project committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Is a voting member of the committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Brings laptop to the defense and submits vote immediately following defense, using Qualtrics survey link provided by the Graduate school for the student</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Is a voting member of the committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Guides other committee members in the online voting process (Qualtrics survey specifically designated for the candidate/student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brings laptop to the defense and submits vote immediately following defense, using Qualtrics survey link provided by the Graduate school for the student</td>
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**Capstone Final Document**

The project document should be written in the format and bibliographic style of the current edition of the APA Publication Manual. The document should be approximately 20-30 double-spaced pages of text, not including references, tables, and figures.
# Capstone Project Topic Approval Form

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<th><strong>Student Name</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Faculty Advisor</strong></th>
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## Capstone Project Committee

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<th><strong>Chair</strong></th>
<th><strong>Graduate Research Faculty</strong></th>
<th><strong>Third Member</strong></th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Brief Bulleted Description of Capstone Project</strong></th>
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## ISU Human Subjects Committee: Indicate Goal Dates for Applicable Steps

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<tr>
<th><strong>CITI Training</strong></th>
<th><strong>Application to Involve Human Subjects in Research</strong></th>
<th><strong>Certificate of Exemption Request</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Capstone Project Committee Chair</strong></th>
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# Thesis

A thesis involves original research that is designed to answer specific questions and to synthesize new information contributing to the understanding and solution of nutrition problems.

The overarching principle used to determine if a Thesis topic is suitable is whether an unanswered question has been identified through a thorough review of the literature. In addition, the topic must be manageable in scope and size.

Students may use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches for their research design.

## Examples of Thesis Formats

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<th>OPTION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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| **Secondary Data Analysis** | • Utilize quantitative methods to analyze existing data set  
• IRB approval is needed for any project that uses data gathered from human subjects (even in cases where the data is de-identified, the thesis student must submit a “Certificate of Exemption Request” to the ISU Human Subjects Committee before data can be accessed and analyzed)  
• Final document may be a manuscript for peer-reviewed journal, poster, or oral presentation at a meeting  
• Oral defense includes overview of process, as well as the key findings |
| **Primary Data Analysis** | • Data collection in the context of an ongoing study or the student can initiate a new study involving primary data collection  
• All theses that use primary data collection will require approval from the ISU Human Subjects Committee (“Application to Involve Human Subjects in Research” must be submitted to and approved by the ISU Human Subjects Committee before data can be collected)  
• Final document may be a manuscript for peer-reviewed journal, poster, or oral presentation at a meeting  
• Oral defense includes overview of process, as well as the key findings |

## General Steps

### Topic Identification

Students are encouraged to think about a potential topic for their Thesis as soon as they are enrolled in the MS in Nutrition program. This strategy lets you begin to do some legwork for the Thesis. For example, you might select thesis-related topics for papers you do for other courses.

Your academic advisor and other faculty in Dietetic Programs are good sounding boards for potential Thesis topics. Faculty may also be engaged in research that a student could dovetail for a Thesis topic.

### Formation of Thesis Committee

See information below on formation of Thesis Committee. You must have your Thesis Committee selected before presenting your proposed area of study for your thesis.

### Topic Approval

Full-time students must select a Thesis topic no later than the beginning of the third semester of coursework. Part-time students should work with their faculty advisor to establish a timeline for selecting the Thesis topic. The student will complete the Thesis Topic Approval Form and submit the completed form to the Thesis Committee Chair for approval.
Human Subjects Training
All students selecting the Thesis option must complete human subject training through the ISU Office of Research Integrity. The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) is web-based training program that addresses research with human subjects. This training is included as a mandatory assignment in the NTD 6640 Research, Writing and Grantsmanship course.

Thesis Proposal Development
After the Thesis topic has been approved, the student is allowed to register for thesis credits and work on the Thesis Proposal. The Thesis Proposal will be developed under the guidance of the Thesis Committee chair. The Thesis Committee chair will approve all thesis documents prior to distribution to other committee members.

Thesis Proposal Presentation
Once the student has drafted a written Thesis Proposal, the student will present the proposal to the entire Thesis Committee for feedback and approval.

After receiving initial approval of their Thesis Committee Chair, the student will send the Thesis Proposal to all Thesis Committee members. In addition, the student will collaborate with the Thesis Committee members to determine a date for the oral presentation of the proposed topic of their thesis.

Please contact Thesis Committee members at least two weeks in advance of the proposed oral presentation date. Students are advised to use Doodle or a similar meeting scheduling tool to identify a day and one hour block of time that works for all Thesis Committee members.

The Thesis Proposal Presentation takes about 1 hour. This includes:

- Introductory remarks by Thesis Committee Chair: 5 minutes
- Candidate presentation of Thesis Proposal: A 15 to 20-minute presentation is expected
- Thesis Committee questions and discussion with candidate: about 20 minutes
- Thesis Committee vote (candidate steps out of the room): 5-10 minutes for the committee to discuss and reach one of the following decisions (majority is needed):
  - Accept the Thesis Proposal as is
  - Accept the Thesis Proposal with modifications without another meeting
  - Accept the Thesis Proposal with modifications with another meeting
  - Reject the Thesis Proposal with further direction clarified
- Report on vote and final remarks by Thesis Committee: 5 minutes

For more details, carefully review the handout titled Thesis Proposal Presentation.

Human Subjects Committee
After approval of the thesis proposal by the Thesis Committee, and before any data collection occurs, the student should submit the thesis proposal to the Human Subjects Committee at Idaho State University for approval. Data collection and manuscript preparation should be completed by the student under the guidance of the Thesis Committee.
Final Thesis Document
The thesis should be written in the format and bibliographic style of the current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual. The document should be approximately 50-60 double-spaced pages of text, not including references, tables, and figures.

Final Thesis Oral Defense
After the Thesis Manuscript is completed, the student will present the final thesis to the committee for approval. The student will send the final Thesis Manuscript to all Thesis Committee members at least two weeks before the defense date, and will coordinate a meeting to present it orally.

The Final Thesis Defense takes about 1 ½ - 2 hours. This includes:

- Introductory remarks by Thesis Committee Chair: 5-10 minutes
- Candidate presentation of Thesis: A 30 to 45-minute presentation is expected
- Thesis Committee questions and discussion with candidate: about 20 minutes
- Thesis Committee vote (candidate steps out of the room): 5-10 minutes for the Thesis Committee to discuss and reach one of the following decisions (majority is needed):
  - Accept the final Thesis as is
  - Accept the final Thesis with modifications without another meeting
  - Accept the final Thesis with modifications with another meeting
  - Reject the final Thesis with further direction clarified
- Report on vote and final remarks by Thesis Committee: 5-10 minutes

Formation of the Thesis Committee
The Thesis Committee needs to be formalized when the student files the Final Program of Study. The Thesis Committee guides and evaluates the student through the thesis proposal development and defense, and final thesis preparation and defense.

Thesis Committee Chair
The Thesis Committee consists of three faculty members. The Thesis Committee Chair must be a faculty member with the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics. The Thesis Committee Chair and the third member must have Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) status.

The Thesis Committee Chair is selected by the student under the guidance of the academic advisor from faculty members in the KDHS with a background in nutrition and dietetics, public health, and/or health education.

Second Thesis Committee Member
The second Thesis Committee member is selected by the student under the guidance of the thesis committee chair from faculty members in KDHS with a background in nutrition and dietetics, public health and/or health education. If an individual from the community is selected, their resume/CV must be submitted to the Graduate School for review and approval. Once the student obtains the resume/CV, their Committee Chair will submit the required paperwork to the Graduate school.

Graduate Faculty Representative
The GFR is selected by the student under the guidance of the Thesis Committee chair from faculty members outside of KDHS. Alternatively, he/she can be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School.
Responsibilities of Involved Parties

| Student                                                                 | • Develops the thesis proposal and final thesis manuscript under the guidance of the thesis committee  
|                                                                      | • Coordinates with thesis committee members date, time and place of proposal defense and final thesis defense meetings  
|                                                                      | • Distributes thesis proposal and final thesis manuscripts to all committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting |
| Thesis Committee Chair                                               | • Provides assistance and direction to the student during the thesis proposal development and final thesis preparation  
|                                                                      | • Ensures that the thesis proposal and final thesis conform to the guidelines of the Graduate School and the Division of Health Sciences  
|                                                                      | • Brings paperwork for approval to thesis proposal presentation  
|                                                                      | • Conducts the thesis proposal defense and any subsequent committee meetings  
|                                                                      | • Conducts the final thesis defense meeting  
|                                                                      | • Informs the student of the results of the final thesis defense and any recommendations from the committee  
|                                                                      | • Brings laptop to the defense and submits vote immediately following defense, using Qualtrics survey link provided by the Graduate school for the student  
|                                                                      | • Informs the Chair of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics of the results of the final thesis defense  
|                                                                      | • Coordinates with other members of the committee in relation to recommended changes in the final thesis defense meeting  
|                                                                      | • Submits a change of grade form to the Graduate School to remove incomplete status (IP) of thesis credits and to document satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory |
| Second Thesis Committee Member                                       | • Actively participates in the development of the thesis, and is expected to attend all meetings of the total thesis committee  
|                                                                      | • Is a voting member of the committee  
|                                                                      | • Brings laptop to the defense and submits vote immediately following defense, using Qualtrics survey link provided by the Graduate school for the student |
| Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR)                               | • Actively participate in the development of the thesis, and is expected to attend all meetings of the total thesis committee  
|                                                                      | • Is a voting member of the committee  
|                                                                      | • Guides other committee members in the online voting process (Qualtrics survey specifically designated for the candidate/student)  
|                                                                      | • Brings laptop to the defense and submits vote immediately following defense, using Qualtrics survey link provided by the Graduate school for the student |

Thesis Proposal and Structure


If approved by the thesis committee chair, the Results and Discussion sections can be replaced for a research article in a publishable format according to the journal appropriate for the topic.
The thesis proposal should include Chapters I, II, and III. The thesis should be arranged according to the approved style manual:

- Photocopy and Use Authorization
- Title Page
- Copyright Page (if applicable)
- Committee Approval Page
- Human Subjects Committee Approval Page (if applicable)
- Dedication (if desired)
- Acknowledgment Page(s) (if desired)
- Table of Contents
- List of Illustrations (if applicable)
- List of Figures (if applicable)
- List of Tables (if applicable)
- List of Abbreviations (if applicable)
- Glossary (if applicable)
- Abstract
- Text of the thesis
  - Chapter I: Introduction
  - Chapter II: Literature Review
  - Chapter III: Methods
  - Chapter IV: Results*
  - Chapter V: Discussion*
- Appendixes
- References

*Publishable article in place of chapters IV-V, if approved by the thesis committee chair
## Thesis Topic Approval Form

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<th>Student Name</th>
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<th>Faculty Advisor</th>
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### Thesis Committee

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<tr>
<th>Brief Bulleted Description of Thesis</th>
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### ISU Human Subjects Committee: Indicate Goal Dates for Applicable Steps

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