

## SUPERVISOR ACCOUNT

Joachim Wehner, MPA Supervisor

The supervision of Capstones has been a highly rewarding experience. The students tackle projects with amazing enthusiasm and a fresh perspective that can generate real solutions to practical problems and develop conceptual thinking in new directions. For example, one Capstone helped the OECD to tackle the redesign of a budget system survey, and conducted a pilot on a shoestring budget and within a very tight deadline. A follow-up project explored how to get more analytic leverage from these data. These projects helped to fundamentally rethink the way such survey

activities are conducted. Another Capstone with the UK Department for International Development carried out a unique stock-take of donor activities to strengthen legislative financial scrutiny, which fed directly into a broader policy review process. I have supervised several other Capstones with DFID, the Overseas Development Institute, the World Bank and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, all of which have allowed me to gain unique knowledge of areas that are very relevant for my own work. Of course, there are sometimes difficult patches in the process, but this often generates a creative tension and is part of learning how to work on a project as part of a team. Witnessing how group dynamics unfold as Capstones tackle their particular challenges, and how individual strengths are combined to achieve a common objective, is another fascinating aspect of supervising these projects.



## Further Information

My company is interested in becoming an MPA Capstone Project Client

Name

Company name

Address

Email address

Contact telephone

Date

Return completed form to:

**Miss Laura Harrison**

MPA Programme Manager

MPA Programme

V814, 8th Floor

Tower Two

2 St Clement's Inn

London WC2A 2AE

For more Capstone information please visit our website:

[www.lse.ac.uk/collections/government/MPA](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/government/MPA)

Email [mpapublicpolicy@lse.ac.uk](mailto:mpapublicpolicy@lse.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)20 7107 5195

Fax: +44 (0)20 7107 5173

# MPA Programme

## INFORMATION ON 'CAPSTONE' PROJECTS

## What is the MPA CAPSTONE

The Capstone is a key part of the second year curriculum of LSE's MPA Programme, accounting for a fifth of the student's assessment in the year. Conventional academic work is often highly individualistic and rather sectionalized by discipline or topic. By contrast, the Capstone is designed to ensure that LSE MPA students have an intensive and closely supervised experience of working in a group on an applied public policy project in a way that extends their capabilities and applies what they have learnt in the MPA core courses in a professional manner.

The project is a group effort, undertaken by a small group of students (usually 4-6 people) for a client organization on a public policy analysis topic relevant to the client body. The team members can devote around 1.5 to 2 days a week to the project over 10 weeks of LSE term, plus some vacation time. Each project is supervised by a member of MPA academic staff, who provides advice and monitors progress. The projects earn a collective grade and students are therefore expected to manage the division and development of work amongst themselves.

The students participating in the project are often highly qualified, some with impressive previous work experience and many are also bilingual. They are individually matched to the selected client companies in order to induce a mutually beneficial relationship. The MPA Capstone therefore offers clients a professional, high standard, fresh thinking consulting service, free of charge.

## The organisation of projects

MPA Capstone organizational procedures are designed to make minimal demands on clients and to allow project teams to work effectively within the constraints on their time. There are two key occasions where project team members meet with the client organization. These meetings allow for the projects to become feasibly scoped, given the project team members' available time and the demands placed on them by LSE's demanding coursework.

If you would like to arrange an appointment to discuss Capstones or how to get your company involved in the initiative please complete and return the form on the reverse of this leaflet.

## Previous MPA Capstone Clients

Accenture

Pensions Service (Department of Work and Pensions)

Department for Work and Pensions

OECD (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development)

Department for International Development

World Bank Institute

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

National Audit Office

EDS (Electronic Data Systems)

Deloitte Touche

FSA (Financial Services Authority)

Shelter

## CASE STUDIES OF MPA CAPSTONE PROJECTS



### CLIENT ACCOUNT

Barry Anderson and Ian Hawkworth at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

We have had the opportunity to work with Capstone students twice. In 2006, we asked a Capstone team to help us by carefully reviewing a 300 question survey of budgeting practices and procedures in Latin American countries and then cutting it by 2/3 – but without losing coverage of the subjects or decreasing the detail of the answers! In addition, the project entailed translating the survey and accompanying glossary into Spanish, putting the survey online so that

the Latin American countries could respond electronically, and securing accurate responses by following up the mailed survey with calls and explanations to the appropriate budget officials. The team did an outstanding job, and their input has been valuable in our work in extending the survey to all OECD countries.

This year, the second Capstone team has been asked to build on the work of the first team and gather information on how our clients – the member countries – use our survey and how they would like to see the results presented. I am very pleased with every aspect of our work with both Capstone teams: the ease of arranging the projects; the attention the students paid to our needs and requests; and most of all the quality and the timeliness of the outputs. I look forward to working with the MPA Capstone again.



Elena (2nd from right) with the OECD Capstone group

### STUDENT ACCOUNT

Elena Mondo – MPA Graduate 2005/06 OECD Capstone 2006

Our Capstone consisted of the development, implementation and analysis of a pilot survey on comparative public budgeting in Latin American countries. Our client was the OECD. We engaged in regular phone and email contact with them, working in close cooperation with the Budgeting and Public Expenditure division of the Public Governance Directorate, and paying two visits to the Paris headquarters: the first in October, in order to illustrate our ideas and proposals and to

compare them with the requirements of the client; the second in March, to present our final report and receive feedback.

I worked in a well balanced team, with respect to knowledge, linguistic skills and personal characteristics: this combination made the work smooth and enjoyable, notwithstanding the considerable amount of time we spent on it. Therefore the capstone was both an interesting and challenging experience, as it was a genuine consulting job, with a specific product to deliver and tight deadlines to complete the work. The excellent feedback we received was gratifying in two respects: from the academic point of view but also, and probably most importantly, from a professional point of view, as the lessons learned and the information gathered in our project were then used by the OECD as the basis for a broader Survey, which is currently in its implementation phase.

It was a unique learning process, one of the most useful modules of the LSE MPA.