

Information and Expectations for Tufts UEP Field Project Hosts

Spring 2021

Field Projects is a required core course for UEP Master's students, in which teams of 3-5 students work on projects hosted by real-world partners for the entire spring semester (from mid-January through early May). The course integrates theory and practice by providing graduate students with the opportunity to work on real-world challenges with government, nonprofit, community, and private sector partners. Students conduct research and analysis and provide recommendations on priority issues and to help advance the goals of Field Projects partners. In spring 2021, we expect to have 9 Field Projects.

What to Expect of Field Project Students

Each student is expected to devote an average of 12 hours a week (up to 600 hours per team) to the project. This time includes weekly 3-hour class sessions, where students meet with instructors and receive other training and project support. Students are expected to develop professional work practices, including building high performing teams, cultivating relationships with project stakeholders, and communicating effectively. Through the project, students develop deep learning through struggling to comprehend complex, real-world problems and contribute valuable services to organizations working to address these challenges. Teams negotiate an Initial Scope of Work and then a detailed Project Work Plan with their project hosts, interact directly with the host and relevant stakeholders, produce a thorough analysis of their findings, and complete the semester with a polished presentation. Because Field Projects is a university course taken for academic credit, UEP expects that project reports and outputs will be fully available to the Tufts community and to the wider public.

What Makes a Successful Project

The best way to get a sense for what makes a successful Field Project is to look at past projects. All projects from the past 5 years are on UEP's website: <https://as.tufts.edu/uep/community/field-projects>. General guidelines for a successful project include:

- *Clearly defined project goals with some flexibility to adjust the scope.*
Bear in mind that the Field Projects course must be completed within a 15-week semester and that the first third of the semester is dedicated to learning about the host and project background and negotiating a detailed project work plan.
- *Vital challenge and compelling topic.*
Students are particularly enthusiastic about Field Projects that address issues of vital importance to a specific community or the broader public.

Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning

- *Feasible within capacity of graduate student time and skills.*
Though some UEP students already have work experience and expertise relevant to the project, all will have to learn content and skills they need during the project. Projects should draw on methods that the students can comfortably handle or learn in a short time, such as: reviewing published materials, interviewing stakeholders, conducting community surveys and focus groups, analyzing case studies, creating advocacy strategies and developing basic plans and designs.
- *Accessibility to data and relevant background materials.*
Project hosts should ideally already have relevant background materials available for student teams and have reasonable confidence that students will be able to access other necessary information and data for the project.
- *Appreciation for respective roles.*
Field Projects is both a required course and a real-world experience with a project partner. We expect Field Projects teams will be treated as student professionals, not as additional employees or interns.

Expectations of Field Project Hosts

- *Dedicated point of contact.*
One person should be designated as the main contact for the team. This person should have the time and availability to respond rapidly (within 48 hours) to the team via email and phone and effectively coordinate with other organizational decision makers and stakeholders.
- *Availability to meet with team and respond to inquiries.*
Project hosts should expect to meet in person (or remotely) with the team a minimum of 3 times over the course of the project, typically at the beginning (January), as the project proposal is finalized (February), and before the project is completed (March-April).
- *Access to necessary organizational documents, data, and people.*
- *Attendance at initial project pitch in November and final presentation at Tufts in early May.*
- *Contribution of \$100-\$200 (depending on resources of host) to UEP to help cover project expenses.*

Project Selection Process

Initial ideas for projects are solicited from July until September of the summer prior to the spring Field Projects. In September, we select projects to develop based on fit, feasibility, and the need to cover a diverse range of topics. Full project descriptions are then drafted by end of October to be presented to students in November. Students then go through a selection process and are assigned to projects by early December.

Contact Information

For more information or questions, please contact lead instructor Penn Loh (Penn.Loh@tufts.edu, 617 627 4608).