

## Professional Project Primer

### *Definitions of roles*

- Professional Project Sponsor: the person who oversees and directs the student's professional work; a sponsor can be an employer or a faculty member, and the student's work can be paid or unpaid, depending on the specific arrangement.
- Committee Chair: the faculty member who takes the primary responsibility of guiding and directing the student's academic work.
- Committee Member: the second faculty member who guides the student's academic work.

### *Description*

The professional project is a demonstration of the student's ability to do independent work at a professional level. The *Sponsor* primarily directs the project and deals with a particular issue or set of issues within a specific context. The *academic supervisory committee* comprises the sponsor and two graduate faculty members, the *Committee Chair* and the *Committee Member*, who ensure that the overall project meets graduate-level academic standards. In practice, this typically means that the sponsor-directed portion of the project is a stand-alone deliverable, while the professional project, as an academic endeavor, also includes a literature review/precedent study and a summative/reflective portion that complements the deliverable.

The project generally:

- Brings something new to the situation (not necessarily original research), demonstrating the student's ability to synthesize from a broad planning/design context and apply it to a specific one
- Discusses how the work relates to the larger context of professional urban planning/design in terms of the issues addressed and/or the methods used
- Discusses the approach taken and/or methods employed, including alternatives and reasons for applying the selected methods
- Reflects on strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and lessons learned during the process

## Guidelines for Professional Project Sponsors

The Sponsor's relationship to the student is supervisory. They should direct the work per their organization's norms and expectations. The department recognizes that this will vary across organizations.

The department envisions the professional project work spanning about two 10-week academic terms, with a week of introduction and a week of conclusion for each term. This translates to an

expected professional workload (for an intern) of about 10 hours/week \* 8 weeks/term \* 2 terms = 160 hours. This is not a hard rule but is intended to give the sponsor a sense of the scope.

The student is expected to facilitate communication among the Sponsor, Committee Chair, and Committee Member in the late autumn/early winter to ensure a mutual understanding of the project's scope. At this point, the student should at least have a preliminary proposal completed and can shift toward collecting data/doing the work during the winter and pivoting toward analysis and writing during the spring.

More detailed information can be found on the Professional Project Guidelines document:  
<https://urbdp.be.uw.edu/programs/mup-graduate-degree/forms/professional-project-guidelines-3/>