



Community-Based Experiential Education Resource Guide

AN OVERVIEW FOR STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY PROJECT
CHAMPIONS

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the students, staff, and members of the community for providing guidance and support for the creation of this guide. In particular, Yaman Al-Nachawati was instrumental in identifying the need for such a resource guide and for leading the creation of the first edition. As the Academic Sustainability Program evolved over the three years since the initial edition, Elise Desjardins, Jacob Brodka, and Zeinab Rahal conducted a thorough review and update of the document, to its current state.

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Preamble

With the goal to support students and Community Project Champions (CPCs) in experiential learning, McMaster's Academic Sustainability Programs (ASP) Office has created this guide, which contains a program overview and a compilation of supporting resources. This guide also outlines the roles, responsibilities, and associated processes with respect to the student's sustainability-focused experiential learning project.

It is requested that students and CPCs review this guide before beginning their involvement in the program, and ensure that all questions and/or concerns are addressed early on. All parties will be contacted by the ASP Office to address any outstanding items with respect to the program and the content within this guide.

Program Overview

Students from various faculties across campus have the opportunity to take part in sustainability-focused experiential education by enrolling in one of a number of [experiential learning courses](#) offered at McMaster University. Each Faculty has their own list of courses, which may be referred to as: academic placement, service learning, experiential learning, independent study, or inquiry, to name a few. Additionally, students may be enrolled in one of the courses within the [Sustainable Future Program](#) (i.e., Sustain 3So3 or Sustain 4So6). Although each course differs in their specific requirements, they generally have the following commonalities:

- The student must identify their project and have an idea of the goals, deliverables, and intended learning outcomes.
- The student must secure an academic supervisor (i.e., faculty member or course instructor) to support the academic components of their project.
- The student must secure a non-academic supervisor (i.e., Community Project Champion and/or ASP staff member) to support their experiential learning in collaboration with their academic supervisor.
- The student must apply to their home Faculty prior to a specified date, which is defined by each Faculty, along with a completed application form.

Proposing Projects and Defining Project Scope

In most cases, it is the proposed CPC who takes the lead by submitting a project for student consideration. However, students, faculty, staff, and other members of the community are also able and encouraged to propose projects. When proposing projects, they should be of an interdisciplinary nature, include some aspect of community engagement, and have some practical outcome(s) that are achievable within a four- or

eight-month academic term¹. The goal is to provide students with the opportunity to lead a project with their CPC's support. The project should be designed to offer flexibility for student experiential learning and the opportunity for innovation and creativity. It should be noted that to support student-led experiential learning, it is not guaranteed that all proposed projects will be selected. Selection of projects is based on individual student interest, which cannot always be predicted.

Role of a Community Project Champion

The Community Project Champion (CPC) will work directly with one or more students to provide guidance and direction throughout their experiential learning project. The CPC will help the student develop their project in line with their individual learning goals. Through providing support in the development of the student's individual interests and passions, high-quality learning and project outcomes can be obtained. The CPC will also support and encourage innovation and creativity, where applicable.

Regular (e.g., weekly) meetings, either in-person, via telephone, or electronically, should take place to support effective communication. Additionally, regular, scheduled meetings can be used to guide project planning and project management throughout, and to ensure project deliverables are successfully achieved.

It is recommended that the CPC encourage the student(s) to form collaborations with other members of the McMaster and/or broader community for additional project support, where required. Providing students with guidance on making connections, which may include an initial email introduction or an invitation to a group meeting, may be required.

Project Milestones

There are several important milestones that help to ensure the effective progression of the project. These milestones may or may not be part of the student's experiential learning project.

Initial Meeting with ASP Office: It is likely that two meetings will be required early on: one to discuss the project idea and project direction; and another one during the final stage of project planning. Students are expected to have their individual learning goals prepared before the initial meeting, during which the student will be provided with direction to begin project planning. Before the second meeting, students are expected to have completed their *Project Plan* proposal, which should have already been discussed with their CPC. In this meeting, a representative from the ASP Office will review the

¹ Academic terms run from September to December, January to April, and May to August.

proposed plan to ensure that the project deliverables are manageable in the proposed timeline. The Project Plan may be included as part of the student's course-specific evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria for the Project Plan can be found in the *Resources* section below.

Initial Meeting with the CPC: During the initial phase of the project, the student will connect with their CPC to review and further develop their draft Project Plan. The Project Plan will be based on the template provided. In using this template, the student(s) and CPC will work together to outline the project overview, objectives, deliverables, milestones, as well as determine methods for ongoing communication.

Progress Report Interview with the ASP Office: Before the interview, students are expected to have sent an updated Project Plan, as well as a preliminary *Final Report* draft to the ASP Office. The Progress Report Interview will focus on discussing progress and changes to date. Questions, comments, and concerns will also be addressed.

Submission of the Final Report (to be included in the ASP Annual Report): A section of the [Academic Sustainability Programs Annual Report](#) highlights the work and achievements of the student experiential learning projects. Students must ensure that the *Model Release Form* is signed by all project collaborators², the CPC, and the ASP Office. Upon completion in September, the Annual Report will be made accessible online, as well as in physical form.

Resources

The following resources are available to support project planning and development:

- Project Plan Template
- Project Plan Evaluation
- Project-Specific Deliverables Evaluation
- Progress Report Interview Evaluation
- Final Report Submission Guidelines
- Final Report Evaluation
- Model Release Form: For Individual Collaborator
- Project Report and Photo Release Form: For Student Groups
- Project Release Form Email Template
- Communications Guide

² *Project collaborators include all individuals, groups, departments, institutions, and organizations that have contributed to the development/implementation of the project. All who contributed and/or are mentioned within the Report should have sufficient time to review the reporting content, as well as to sign the Model Release Form. They should also be made aware that the Final Report will be made publicly available.*

Contact

If you have any other questions, please contact Kate Whalen, Senior Manager, Academic Sustainability Programs, via email at whalenk@mcmaster.ca.

Academic Sustainability Programs Office

Kenneth Taylor Hall, B110

McMaster University

1280 Main Street W., Hamilton, ON

905-525-9140 ext. 21575

www.asp.mcmaster.ca

Facebook: [MacSustain](#)

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