



---

**DATE:** August 2020  
**TO:** Prospective Advanced Policy Analysis (APA) Client  
**FROM:** The Dean and Faculty of the Goldman School of Public Policy  
**SUBJECT:** Client-Based Projects with Goldman School Students, Spring 2021

---

## OVERVIEW

In their final semester of study, students at the Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP) are required to write a high-quality professional paper (Advanced Policy Analysis or APA) in order to complete the Master of Public Policy degree. With faculty supervision and advice, each student conducts a thorough analysis of a major policy question facing a “real-world” organization/practitioner, applying the interdisciplinary methods, approaches, and perspectives studied in GSPP’s core curriculum. This paper must meet not only the academic standards of the School’s faculty, but also the standards and needs of a practitioner who serves as a “client” for the work. That means that while the analytic work and argumentation underlying these reports must meet academic standards, we expect the written product to be intelligible to lay readers.

Most of the students’ time on the APA project is spent outside of the classroom. However, students meet once a week with their faculty advisor and a small group of peers in a seminar which provides an opportunity for review, evaluation, and support of the student projects. The APA represents between 40% to 75% (18 to 30 hours per week) of a student’s workload in the Spring semester, depending on the scope of the project.

At the beginning of May, students deliver written reports to their clients outlining their policy recommendations in light of relevant tradeoffs. In the past, student reports have led to significant changes in policy and organizational management practices. It is the school’s policy that final APA reports are made available to the public, with occasional exceptions when mutually agreed to by individual clients, students, and faculty members.

Approximately 90 students will be doing APA projects in Spring 2021. For projects to be completed in May 2021, we invite organizations to submit proposals between now and November 1, 2020 online (online submission will open in early August 2020). All submitted proposals will be circulated among students for review. Students interested in a project will submit application materials requested by potential clients, as outlined on the proposal form.

## WHAT OUR STUDENTS CAN DO FOR YOU

- **Training:** Students have training in microeconomics, statistics, political and legal analysis, management, policy analysis and decision-making, plus a variety of electives.
- **Work Experience:** Most students have had at least 4 years of work experience before graduate school. In addition, they have already completed a client-based policy analysis group project and a summer policy internship where they have applied the core skills learned during their first year of study.
- **Policy Consulting:** Our students will act as consultants for your organization providing professional level analysis and recommendations. They are not interns, and should not be assigned tasks extraneous to their APA project.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF "GOOD" PROJECTS

1. **Intellectually and analytically challenging.** Ideal projects involve some uncertainty regarding the projected effects of specific policy choices in which the alternative outcomes are very different and consequential. In addition, projects should not be based on a client’s preferred solution. We enjoin our students to take a critical stance toward any policy analysis problem and, if necessary, to try to persuade the client of a different point of view. Students are consultants (rather than interns) and are expected to maintain a fair degree of professional and analytical autonomy. Projects involving little more than collecting survey data, developing program descriptions or information about possible funding sources, or providing analysis to support a pre-identified policy choice are not suitable unless these activities raise interesting issues of analysis.

2. **Centered on a decision faced by your organization.** APA projects should have an important “applied” component, rather than be primarily based on research with remote policy implications. Applied projects allow students to hone their policy analysis skills and their ability to confront difficult tradeoffs between two or more alternative courses of action.

**The key to a good APA project formulation is that it should begin with a statement of a problem or a perceived problem facing the client, and clearly state the policy decision for which the client is seeking suggestions or recommendations.** Policy decisions may be at the organization or agency level, at the legislative level, or elsewhere.

Essential to a successful project is the process of assessing possible solutions to a policy problem, given a range of policy goals or criteria, and weighing tradeoffs, though the project may include analytical components in addition to recommendations on a policy decision, such as evaluation of an existing program, a review of best practices, a SWOT analysis, or analysis of data.

3. **Possible to complete within 15 weeks.** Projects should be relatively narrow though complex, rather than broad but simple. Note that there are instances when the client requires the student to start the project sooner than January; we regard this as perfectly acceptable, as long as this is mutually agreed upon between the client and student.

## PROJECT EXAMPLES

Some examples of good APA project formulations inspired by past projects are:

- The Legislative Assembly of California has received a torrent of complaints about the quality of care at State run nursing homes for veterans. The project consists of assessing the current state of these facilities and proposing changes to improve the quality of services in state nursing homes for veterans.
- Educational loans for international development have a mixed record, while some loan programs are successful, others exhibit high default rates or inconsistent outcomes. As a funder of educational loan programs, how should [organization X] determine which programs to fund?
- California agriculture contributes heavily to carbon emissions, yet by reducing nitrogen fertilizer use and increasing carbon sequestration, farmers and ranchers could mitigate up to several million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. What are the policy options available to make this happen?
- The San Francisco Police Department has been expanding its workforce, yet in the last two years applications have declined. Why is this happening and what should the SFPD do to increase applications from a diverse applicant pool?
- California has set a target to fully decarbonize its electrical grid by 2045, yet renewable energies pose a challenge in that they are intermittent in nature. How should the regulatory framework be adjusted to mitigate this problem?

## CLIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful working relations between students and clients will vary greatly in detail. But at their core they all have a client who sets high expectations for quality of analysis and presentation. A client has five main responsibilities:

1. Meet with the student, in person if possible, prior to the start of the project to negotiate and define the project's scope (remember that projects must meet the student's academic requirements and interests, as well as the client's needs);
2. Provide internal data sources relevant to the project, and advise students about acquiring external data sources;
3. Arrange for student access to stakeholders who may serve as an information source related to the project;
4. Meet with the student regularly throughout the Spring semester to ensure the project stays on course, as well as provide feedback and comments to interim drafts; and
5. Read and provide feedback on the final report.

**Most clients do more than this.** Interacting more frequently with the student – including commenting on interim written products – typically improves the final report and increases the likelihood it will meet the client's needs. In addition, clients often provide students with professional development opportunities such as presenting and/or disseminating their work to key decision-makers, stakeholders, and other audiences as appropriate. Some clients will work with the student to submit the final report for publication.

**Compensation:** Most students are paid by their clients, typically in the range of \$7,000 – \$9,000 total. However, students are sometimes paid considerably more than this—and occasionally, though rarely, less. The market is at work here as elsewhere, and projects offering higher compensation tend to attract more student interest and talent. *If your organization cannot offer payment for the project, reimbursement for project expenses including but not limited to travel, survey or transcription tools, attending conferences relevant to the project, as well as expenses such as phone calls and photocopying, is expected from the client.* All payment details must be agreed upon in writing before the start of the project, and should be negotiated with the APA student consultant directly.

## APA PROJECT TIMELINE

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>August – November</b> | <b>Submit proposals.</b> Clients begin to submit project proposals in August for students to review, with most students finalizing their client choices by early November. <i>We encourage clients to submit project proposals early during this timeframe.</i> <b>Relationships between students and clients, as well as the basic project scope, should be established no later than December 15<sup>th</sup>.</b> |
| <b>January-May</b>       | <b>Project work begins.</b> Students begin projects during the week of January 19, 2021, although preliminary work on the project can be done by the student depending on the needs of the client and/or the project. (This must be mutually agreed upon by the client and student.)   |
| <b>Mid-April</b>         | <b>Draft project due.</b> Draft paper is due to the faculty advisor and client for review and feedback.  |
| <b>Early May</b>         | <b>Final paper due.</b> Final paper is due to the faculty advisor, client, and GSPP student services unit.   |

## NEXT STEPS

If you are interested in sponsoring an APA project for Spring 2021, we invite you to submit a proposal using the enclosed proposal form between now and November 1, 2020. If you have questions, please contact Cecille Cabacungan, Managing Director of Career & Alumni Services (510-642-1303 or [cecille@berkeley.edu](mailto:cecille@berkeley.edu)).

## OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK WITH GOLDMAN SCHOOL STUDENTS

If the APA project does not meet your organization's needs, you might also consider submitting one of the following:

- **Introductory Policy Analysis (IPA) – Small teams of 1<sup>st</sup> year MPP student consultants (for projects Spring 2021)**  
 Contacts: Mia Bird, Assistant Adjunct Professor & IPA Faculty Coach ([miabird@berkeley.edu](mailto:miabird@berkeley.edu))  
 Meredith Sadin, Assistant Adjunct Professor & IPA Faculty Coach ([msadin@berkeley.edu](mailto:msadin@berkeley.edu))  
 Kari Malkki, MPP 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student & IPA Project Assistant ([kari.malkki@berkeley.edu](mailto:kari.malkki@berkeley.edu))  
 Website: <http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career-services/client-based-projects/introduction-to-policy-analysis-ipa>
- **Capstone Analytic Project (CAP) – One MPA student consultant (for projects Spring 2021)**  
 Contacts: Professor Jane Mauldon, MPA Faculty Director ([jmauldon@berkeley.edu](mailto:jmauldon@berkeley.edu) / 510-847-1619)  
 Website: <http://gspp.berkeley.edu/career-services/client-based-projects/capstone-analytic-project-cap>
- **Summer Internships – 1<sup>st</sup> year MPP students (for internships Summer 2021)**  
 Contact: Cecille Cabacungan, Managing Director of Career/Alumni Services ([cecille@berkeley.edu](mailto:cecille@berkeley.edu) / 510-642-1303)  
 Website: <http://gsppjobs.net> (visit this site to post your summer internship opportunity directly)