The Applied Policy Project
STUDENT MANUAL
2016–2017
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Director’s Preface

The School of Public Policy’s capstone Applied Policy Project offers students the opportunity to work on a real-world professional task in a safe, supportive setting. It is the bridge between the scholarly rigor of our academic courses and the world of the practitioner.

My own graduate training was academic—in modern European history—but I have had a practitioner’s career. Working at the International Tribunal in The Hague taught me that when you walk into a courtroom, you need to be prepared and your evidence has to be airtight. My experience at International Crisis Group showed me that when you get the right information to the right people, it can prevent conflict and save lives. Founding my own think tank taught me lessons about management, fund raising, and advocacy. These are among the skills the Applied Policy Projects hone in our graduates.

Many students say the Applied Policy Project is the high point of their time at SPP. As director, I take responsibility for providing students with stimulating, challenging projects, and for giving them the support and training they need. Our resident faculty gives each team professional advice and support. Ultimately, however, each project is a reflection of the hard work students bring to it. For many students, the Applied Policy Project will be their first major intervention in the world of public policy. It is up to students to make it something they, the client, and SPP will be proud of. I look forward to working with SPP students to make that happen.
Introduction

The Applied Policy Project (APP) is a core component of the MPA degree, and is required for graduation. In their APP, students work in small 2–4 person teams with a faculty adviser on a year-long consultancy project done for an external client. Students are responsible for all aspects of their projects, from defining the problem and choosing a method to presenting their results and evaluating their own and their peers’ work.

APPs challenge students to deal with unpredictable contingencies that characterise real-world work. Every client organization is different. Students learn how to understand and adapt to their client’s principles, priorities, values, and norms. They learn how to work closely and intensively with a small, diverse team over an extended period of time, how to manage criticism, friction, and conflict in a constructive way, and how to make a team more than the sum of its parts.

Other parts of the MPA curriculum develop skills needed to do well in the APP. For example, the Skills For Impact (SFI) curriculum offers modules that develop team building, self and group management skills, and emotional intelligence. (See the MPA Student Manual on page 61 for more on SFI.) The APP is the ideal laboratory for developing and perfecting teamwork skills. Students are evaluated not only on assignments, but also on their contribution toward positive and productive team dynamics.

Students with a strong interest in doing an APP in a specific field should make sure to take the elective courses they will
need for their projects. For example, students wishing to do a data-intensive APP should supplement their core courses in quantitative methods with additional work in applied regression, cost-benefit analysis, or impact evaluation. Students interested in a conflict prevention project should take the class on conflict analysis or courses in the Security specialization. The APP Director can advise students on course selection. So too can the MPA Director and SPP faculty.

Presented with a problem by the client, students identify the quantitative and qualitative research methods they can bring to bear, the relevant analytical and policy development tools, and the communication skills needed to present their findings. They learn how to apply scholarly skills to practical problems and how one technique can build on the results of another. Each student is expected to spend approximately 375 hours on the APP throughout the academic year. The teams are in residence at CEU during their projects. They have a modest budget to support their work, which many of them use for travel and fieldwork. (See “Practicalities” below for more information on scheduling fieldwork.) Each student team meets regularly with a designated faculty adviser who provides advice, feedback, and quality control.
The Management for APPs Anchor Course

The APP Director teaches the Management for Applied Policy Projects, which all MPA students are required to take. During the course, students will work together on an APP for an external client. Under the director’s guidance, students will study the client, define the problem, formulate a strategy, conduct research, analyse their finding, develop a policy recommendation, and present their work. Much of the work will be done during class time. SPP faculty and external experts will provide additional coaching and expertise. The class culminates in a presentation to the APP client in person or by video link.
Practicalities

Course Registration and Credits

Both the Management for Applied Policy Projects course and the APP are mandatory for all MPA students. The Management for APP course is taken in the Winter term of the first year and yields 2 credits. The APP is worked on in all three terms of the second year and yields 10 credits. Together, the course and the APP account for 12 credits.

Students must register for the APP in all three terms of their second year. The credits and a single grade are registered once, at the end of the Spring term.

Where Do the Projects Come From?

Most APPs are proposed by clients. The APP Office actively recruits clients too. Students and faculty also propose projects. In all cases, the deadline is February 28, 2017 for projects starting in September 2017. In addition to a topic, student proposals must identify a client organization that is willing to work with them, and a faculty member who has agreed to be their faculty adviser. Students interested in proposing their own project should contact the APP Office well in advance of this deadline. The application materials can be found on the APP website.
Grading

Students will get a single, individual grade for the APP (10 credits) at the end of the Spring term of the second year. The grade has an individual and a team component. The final grade is the average of these two components, which are of equal weight. The individual component measures the quality of the student’s written work and contributions to the team. The team component, which is the same for all team members, measures the quality of the work done for the client and the team’s ability to work well together.

Students will have an opportunity to participate in setting the grading criteria for both components. Early in the project, students will meet with their faculty adviser to talk about what they wish to achieve, what they will produce, and how they will be assessed. Students should set specific, measurable, and reasonable goals that detail the project deliverable. The faculty adviser will help students with this and will ensure that the process is fair. For example, if students set goals that they expect to easily surpass, the adviser may lower the grade in response; if they set unreasonably difficult goals, the adviser may suggest that the goals be revised. Students will discuss the team’s goals. In addition, each student will set individual goals.

At the end of the project, students will look back on what they have achieved in relation to the goals and grading criteria they agreed with the faculty adviser, and assign themselves an individual grade. Students will have to provide evidence in support of their grade. This is why it is important to have specific and measurable goals. Evidence can be objective and quantifiable (for example,
number of unique visitors to a website they created) or subjective (for example, feedback from the client or others). The team will do the same exercise for the team grade. All members of the team will have to agree on the team grade. The faculty adviser will challenge students to defend the grades they have assigned themselves, and will have the right to override them if she/he believes they are inappropriate. The adviser has the option of assigning a portion of the grade. Faculty advisers who choose to do this will make this clear at the beginning of the project when students are setting the grading criteria. Students have the right to appeal the APP grade. (See the MPA Student Manual, Appealing a Grade, page 35.)

Ten credits are a large portion of the overall credit load. To help avoid an unpleasant surprise, students should take stock of their progress at regular intervals. Students are urged to schedule a meeting with their faculty adviser at the end of the Fall term and again at the end of the Winter term to discuss how they are doing. In these discussions, students should evaluate their own and the team’s progress honestly, and be prepared to provide evidence to back up their view of the grade they think they have earned to date.

All aspects of grading, the individual and team components, the self-assigned and (where relevant) faculty-assigned components, should address both the objective quality of the work that is delivered to the client, and the performance during the project.
Finances and Budget

Students may apply for an Educational Grant to support their APP work. It is up to each team to decide whether, and for what purposes, to seek funding, and to then submit a team application. The amount available varies by year; in past years, teams have received an average of approximately €3,000 thanks to generous support from anonymous donors. Each team’s application will be considered. Teams may receive different amounts of funding.

All team applications must be approved by the relevant faculty adviser and by the APP Director. The application must include a detailed budget and work plan. If the application is approved, students must apply individually to the CEU Budapest Foundation for disbursement of funds. This application (to the CEU Budapest Foundation) is brief and simple, but it must be completed in a timely fashion, as the Foundation only approves requests at its regular meetings, which take place roughly once per month. Further information on funding is offered during the Management for APPs course. Questions should be directed to the APP Director.

Some clients offer additional support to their student teams. Students should not approach their clients with requests for financial assistance of any kind.
Resource People

Students can draw on support from the following resources:

**APP Office**

Marko Prelec is Professor of Practice and the Director of Applied Policy Projects and is the first point of contact for most APP issues. The APP Director teaches the Management for Applied Policy Projects course. The Director, supported by the Professional Skills & Applied Learning Coordinator, also offers student teams regular advice on organising their project, working together as a team, budgeting, planning research activities, analysing their findings, drafting their conclusions, developing policy proposals, and other project tasks as they arise. Teams are encouraged to meet with the Director at least once a month, and more often as needed. The Director can also provide coaching on specific management skills, and help teams overcome conflicts. The Director administers periodic self- and peer assessments and meets students one on one to help them gain insight from these exercises.

**Faculty Advisers**

Faculty advisers provide subject-matter expertise to the teams. They introduce students to the scholarly literature and relevant policies and programs and guide their research design. Advisers meet their teams regularly, at least once a month, to review their
progress and advise on next steps. They read and comment on the
team’s written work before it goes to the client. Faculty advisers
are not expected, however, to do heavy editing or intensive work
on drafts. All teams are strongly encouraged to make use of the
Center for Academic Writing.

Faculty advisers are responsible for grading the APP, with the
support of the APP Director.

**Client Project Liaison**

The client’s Project Liaison plays a critical role in the APP and is
the point of contact between the student team and the client
organization. Teams should conduct a detailed, substantive
conversation with the liaison at least once per term—during the
October campus visit, before or after Winter break, and during
Spring term, and more frequently via email. Liaisons are not
responsible for assigning or monitoring work, or coaching or
mentoring students.
The Trajectory of APPs

Every project follows its own unique trajectory from start to finish. They all begin, however, with First Month, an intensive period of guided reading and research, which culminates in client campus visits in October. All projects end with a presentation to the SPP community in May.

First Month

During First Month, students immerse themselves in the project and learn as much as they can about their client’s mission, methods, and values; the problems raised in their project; country-specific issues; any new methodologies. The goal of this period is to make sure students understand their projects before committing to a specific work plan. First Month concludes with a client visit to SPP in Budapest, normally in October. This visit gives clients, teams, and advisers the opportunity to meet and agree on a detailed work plan for the team.

Faculty advisers and the APP office are intensively involved in guiding student teams during First Month, helping teams structure their research, and ask the right questions. Clients may also suggest background readings for the student team, and make people available for interviews.
Client Visit

SPP invites all client organizations to send the Project Liaison (or another representative) to visit the CEU campus and meet their student team in October. The client visit is an opportunity for teams to make a short presentation outlining how they see the problem and setting out in general terms their proposed activities for the project; and for clients to give feedback, correct misunderstandings, and provide additional guidance to the team. The goal of these discussions is to arrive at an agreement on what the team will do over the coming months, including a timetable of deliverables.

Fieldwork

Students are encouraged to undertake a short period of fieldwork—roughly a week—as part of their APP. Where possible, students should use holiday breaks (especially the long break between Fall and Winter terms) for this purpose. Students may miss up to one week of class time (with their instructors’ advance permission) for fieldwork. In exceptional cases (for example, travel to remote locations) slightly longer absences may be approved by course instructors and the MPA Program Director. In all cases, students who miss class for fieldwork will have to present evidence explaining why the fieldwork must take place at this particular time. They will also be required to make up the work as detailed in the MPA Student Manual, page 33.
Final Presentations

All members of the student team are expected to participate in the Final presentations that will take place in late May. The SPP community will be invited to attend and celebrate students’ accomplishments and hear about what they have learned. Clients will be invited to attend via video link as well.
# Timeline

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<th>GENERAL</th>
<th>FIRST YEAR</th>
<th>SECOND YEAR</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>September Pre-session and Zero Weeks</strong></td>
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<td>September 8: Orientation session and Q&amp;A with APP Director.</td>
<td>All teams meet with APP Director to kick off First Month. Funding application forms distributed.</td>
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<td><strong>Late September</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>All teams meet with their Faculty advisers and if needed with APP Director. Teams working on First Month: studying client, doing background research. Faculty advisers consult with APP Director on project scope.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Client visits to CEU in mid-October: talk and reception by Acting Dean and APP Director.</td>
<td>Teams meet with faculty advisers and/or APP Director to prepare for client visit.</td>
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November

Teams begin to implement their plans. Budgets and applications for funding should be prepared and submitted. Meetings with faculty advisers and APP Director as needed. Clients are kept up to date on progress.

December

Students register for Management for Applied Policy Projects course given in Winter Term. Students interested in proposing their own APPs must schedule a meeting with the APP Director by December 9 at the latest.

Teams continue working and planning for fieldwork as necessary. Meetings with faculty advisers and APP Director.

January 2017

Management for Applied Policy Projects course begins.

Mid project evaluations: students complete self, peer (team member), faculty adviser and APP Director evaluations. One on one meetings with APP Director to discuss self and peer evaluations and second half of project.
# February

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<tr>
<td>Mid-course evaluations of Management for Applied Policy Projects.</td>
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<td>Teams working on projects. Meetings with faculty adviser and APP Director as needed.</td>
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# March

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<tr>
<td>Students apply for APPs. Management for Applied Policy Projects course ends with client visit to review deliverables.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teams continue research and analyse results; drafting report and policy recommendations should be under way. Meetings with faculty adviser and APP Director as needed.</td>
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# April

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<td>Clients and teams for coming year announced.</td>
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<td>Team or one-on-one meetings with APP Director and/or faculty advisers to help with drafting report and policy recommendations; teams also working as needed with Center for Academic Writing.</td>
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**May**

- Expo on May 26 with presentations by all teams; clients invited to participate by video link.
- Teams meet with faculty advisers and APP Director to discuss projects and plan summer background reading.
- Draft reports with policy recommendations due in May unless otherwise agreed with clients and faculty advisers. APP Director and faculty advisers review drafts. Final reports due May 19 unless otherwise arranged. Grading self-evaluation exercise moderated by faculty advisers.

**June**

- Selected reports and video interviews posted on APP website.
- Final grades due June 8.

**Summer**

- Students on internships. Teams do background reading to prepare for their projects.
Appendix A: Recommended Readings

It is a good idea to look at a few of the written reports from previous years’ Applied Policy Project teams. These are available from the APP Office. In addition, the following are helpful, practical guides to building important skills.

**General project management**


Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (“d.school”) *Bootcamp Bootleg* (available online).

The d.school pioneered many of the approaches and skills used in the APP program. This is an irreverent but deeply informative (and short) summary of their approach to designing a good project. Especially recommended for developing empathy with a client.

**For teamwork**


Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen, Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most, and Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen, Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well. Two short books by members of the Harvard Negotiation Project, with invaluable tips on how to interact with others in difficult situations—ranging from justified feedback to simple or complicated disagreement to unwarranted personal attacks—in a constructive way. The feedback book is pitched to receivers of feedback, but is equally useful for managers giving it.


**Goal setting**

Oliver Burkeman, The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can’t Stand Positive Thinking, pp. 75–100, and Charles Duhigg, Smarter Faster Better: The Secrets of Being Productive in Life and Business, pp. 103–33. Together, these two selections explain two popular theories of goal-setting (“SMART” and stretch goals) and lay out the dangers and risks of goal-oriented behaviour. Goals are an unavoidable part of APPs and much professional work, and the ideas in these selections can help avoid many problems.
For writing

Economist Style Guide

George Orwell, Politics and the English Language. The classic.

General clarity of thought

Thomas Nagel, Mortal Questions. A book of philosophy essays with only limited relevance for public policy (except for the somewhat dated pieces on the war in Vietnam), but a model of clear exposition that honestly confronts all sides of important questions ranging from life and death to love and sex.
Appendix B: Quick Reference Guide

This quick reference guide highlights the individuals that students, faculty, and staff can consult for specific Applied Policy Project needs.

APP Website: http://spp.ceu.edu/applied-policy-project

Who to See

APP Director
- APP requirements
- Policies, procedures, guidelines
- Management for APP course issues
- Client issues
- Ad hoc support needs
- Day-to-day project issues
- Grading & evaluation issues

SPP Finance Coordinator
- CEU Budapest Foundation funding proposals & status
- APP reimbursement requests
- Post-travel expense reports

CEU Center for Academic Writing
writing@ceu.edu
- Assistance on academic writing
CEU Computer & Statistics Center
http://www.personal.ceu.edu/comp/
- Courses on computer programs, including statistical packages

CEU Library
http://www.library.ceu.edu
- Library resources
- Training on databases, literature search strategies
Appendix C: Current and Past Clients and Projects

2015–17 Clients and Projects

The Budapest Institute

The Budapest Institute is a partnership of economists and political scientists producing independent research and analysis to inform policy making, tracking and evaluation in Hungary and Europe. This student-organized project will research recent changes in the take-up of the main means tested benefit schemes in Central and Eastern European countries and identify the relevant drivers. This will tell our client how many people are not getting social benefits even though they are very poor.

ADVISER: Alexis Diamond, Visiting Professor

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

EBRD is the leading development bank focused on countries in transition to a market economy. The project will study the role of civil society (if any) in promoting transition resilience in EBRD countries of operations.

ADVISER: Anand Murugesan, Assistant Professor

European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

ECMI is a government-supported think tank that provides practice and policy-oriented research on minority-majority relations
in Europe. The student team will prepare a feasibility study on their possible return to Macedonia, where they have not worked since 2007, and where the general political situation, and inter-communal relations specifically, have deteriorated sharply in recent years.

**ADVISER:** Kirsten Roberts Lyer, Associate Professor of Practice

**Health Poverty Action (HPA)**

HPA is a London-based organization working in fourteen countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, strengthening the poorest and most marginalised in their struggle for health. The project will explore the way in which drug policies limit access to controlled, but essential, medicines such as morphine, in countries of the global South.

**ADVISER:** Julia Buxton, Acting Dean and Professor of Comparative Politics

**International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)**

ICTJ is an international NGO that works to help countries in transition from deadly conflict or repression, address the legacy of past abuses and build strong, trusted civic institutions. The project will research the relationship between anti-corruption and transitional justice efforts in three representative countries emerging from violent conflict or authoritarian rule.

**ADVISER:** Cristina Corduneanu-Huci, Assistant Professor

**International Crisis Group**

Crisis Group, a leading, global conflict prevention organization, is sponsoring two projects. A project on Turkey will likely focus
on the migrant and refugee community, but is in flux due to the post-coup situation. A project on West Africa will research violent extremism and vigilante groups active in the Greater Sahel and Lake Chad basin region of West Africa. Both projects are advised by Yahya Sadowski.

**ADVISER:** Yahya Sadowski, Professor of Political Economy

**Liberty’s Promise**

Liberty’s Promise is a Washington, D.C. based non-governmental organisation that works to support immigrant youth and help them make good lives for themselves and their families in their new home. A student team will conduct a feasibility study on creating a program of integration and acculturation for communities of migrants settling in up to four European countries with substantial numbers of migrants.

**ADVISER:** Sahana Udupa, Associate Professor

**PAX**

PAX is a Dutch peace organization whose mission is the protection of civilians against acts of war; an end to armed conflict; and building a just peace. The project, for PAX’s Ukraine program, will study policies states have used toward territories trying to break away, with the aim of distilling lessons learned on effects of specific policies and recommending policies for Kiev to apply toward the eastern territories outside of its control.

**ADVISER:** Bernhard Knoll-Tudor, Director, Global Policy Academy
Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar (RELAF, Latin American Foster Care Network)

RELAF is the leading non-profit organization in the field of child care and protection in Latin America. The project team will do an evaluation of RELAF’s efforts to drive the policy reform process, with a specific focus on Panama (and perhaps Mexico).

**ADVISER:** Cameran Ashraf, Assistant Professor

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

WWF is committed to ending the devastation of the global environment and building a future in which humanity and nature live in harmony. The project will map tools and structures for global sustainability efforts in the supply chain for food. The aim is to provide WWF with a toolkit that can help analyze and help set targets for companies’ efforts to reach the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to food.

**ADVISER:** Marko Godart Prelec, Professor of Practice, Director of the APP program

2014–16 Clients

**European Stability Initiative**

“Raising Awareness and Mobilizing Action to Release Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan.”

**Greek Forum of Refugees**

“Upholding Refugee and Asylum Seekers’ Rights in Greece.”
Human Rights Watch

“Curbing Ethnic Profiling and Discrimination by Police in the European Union.”

International Crisis Group

“Drawing Lessons from 20 Years of Conflicts and Post-Conflict Transitions Worldwide.”

The Linkage Project

“Estimating Internally Displaced Populations to Improve Aid Delivery with New Analytics Software.”

SPP Student Team

“Understanding Jobbik’s Popularity and Implications of Far-Right Political Movements in the Region.”

Tau Investment Management

“Monitoring Violations in the Textile & Apparel Industry to Transform the Global Supply Chain.”

UN Habitat

“How Urban Mobility and Space Affect Youth Unemployment.”

UN Office of the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide & Responsibility to Protect

“Preparedness to Prevent Atrocity Crimes in the Caucasus Region.”
Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association

“Engendering Policy in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Sector in Zimbabwe.”

2013–15 Clients

BRAC

“Government policies on primary school education in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Uganda, South Sudan, and the Philippines.”

Center for Conflict, Negotiation and Recovery

“Mechanisms to bring refugees into the policy process with specific reference to Syrian refugees in Lebanon.”

Freedom Now

“Mobilizing partners in EU institutions on behalf of those wrongly imprisoned.”

Global Witness

“Creating community-focused recommendations to improve transparency in the oil, gas, and mining sector.”

Institute for Integrated Transitions

“Creating a navigation guide on international assistance in political transitions.”
Natural Resource Governance Institute
“Engaging youth organizations in Myanmar.”

Transparency International
“Developing corruption indicators for state owned enterprises in Slovakia.”

UK Department for International Development
“Building an evidence base on public attitudes in Sudan.”