



# MASTER OF URBAN INNOVATION - CAPSTONE COURSE

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## OVERVIEW:

The Master of Urban Innovation (MUI) is a 20-month professional masters' program for students interested in urban issues and economic development, offered through the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). Through the MUI program, students are trained to lead and manage innovative urban economic development initiatives.

In September 2022, the second year MUI student cohort will undertake a capstone project. These projects provide an opportunity for the students to apply the insights, learning and skills developed in their program and internship to a real-world project. Students are expected to complete a project for sponsor (or client) in an organization that can effectively engage their skills to create value for the sponsor organization and a practical learning experience for the students.

Unlike an internship or co-op placement, the capstone project allows for students to work on a research project or problem in more of a consulting or advisory role that works toward the objectives of the sponsor client. This may include visits to the sponsor organization, but most of the work will be done remotely, and most (if not all) meetings will also be done through Zoom or another video communication tool.

## PROJECT IDENTIFICATION:

Students will be assigned to work in groups of 2-3 students, under the supervision of the MUI capstone project faculty instructor, Ian Bromley. Student teams will be assigned to projects in September and will work on their project until the end of March on a project with the sponsor acting as a non-paying "client".

MUI faculty and staff will work with potential sponsor organizations to identify and scope appropriate capstone project opportunities that fit with the needs and interests of the sponsor organization, the time frames of the program (September to March/April), and the interests and capabilities of the students.

It is important that the projects provide real research, insights, and a final product (presentation deck and/or report) that is of value to the sponsor organization. This will ensure true engagement with the students.

## PROJECT TIMING:

Projects will run approximately from September to April. Once student teams are assigned to projects they will meet or correspond with the client/sponsor to ask questions and to understand the sponsor's needs and objectives.

In October, students will prepare and/or present a project proposal/scope of work to the sponsor for their input and approval. This will describe:

the student teams' understanding of the sponsor's objectives for the project the scope of work for the project the project methodology and work phases timing of key milestones and deliverables. The sponsor will have an opportunity to make adjustments or provide feedback to the student teams, which will be reflected in a final version of the proposal to be agreed by the student team and the sponsor organization.

Through November and December, the student teams will undertake Phase One research and analysis as agreed in the proposal, resulting in an interim report/presentation in January.


Based on sponsor feedback from the interim report and presentation, the student teams will engage in further research and analysis, focusing on the development of a set of recommendations, action plan and/or other outputs (as agreed in the proposal).

A draft final report will be submitted to the sponsor in March. This will incorporate sponsor feedback, after which the student teams will then deliver a final report to the sponsor client by mid-April. Students will present their final capstone projects at a final event at the end of the term.

## PROJECT SCOPE:

Please note that the students are completing the capstone project as a requirement of their graduate program. Students are not paid for this work and are learning and developing their skills to become professionals in innovative urban development. While they will be working under the supervision of the capstone project faculty instructor (who is an experienced practitioner and consultant), they are not professional consultants. Teams should not be engaged as a substitute for a professional consultancy. Students have access to resources at the University of Toronto, including its world-class faculty and library system. Budget resources are limited.

Successful projects, which are most likely to produce the best outcome for sponsors and student teams, would involve projects that:

- are meaningful for the sponsors, but are not mission critical;
  - fit within the project timing as described above;
  - involve some combination of literature scans, desk and/or telephone research, best practice reviews, policy reviews, data analysis, and/or assessment of options;
  - result in a set of recommendations, an action plan, or an outline of recommended next steps.
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## BENEFITS TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

The expected benefits to sponsor organizations include:

- access to in-depth research and analysis for a discrete issue/assignment, especially on issues that the organization might not have resources (e.g. budget, staff) to complete;
- insights and ideas from a graduate student team, which can provide an external perspective based on the latest knowledge of urban innovation and economic development issues and best practices;
- research and analytic skills commensurate with second year professional-track masters students in a top tier university; and exposure to students who may be potential employees or collaborators in the future.

## HOST TESTIMONIALS

*"We are very pleased with the work that was completed by the students, as it is comparable to other works we have had completed by consultants in the industry. This project is one of the many action items noted in our Economic Development Action Plan 2021-2025, and its completion is instrumental in achieving our departmental goals.*

*I would highly recommend this program to other economic development organizations or anyone in municipal government who is tasked with seeking innovative solutions to community challenges."* **City of Hamilton**

*"Throughout the process they were extremely professional and treated me and the broader team like a real client. I would highly recommend this to other sponsors/clients and would be happy to serve as a reference."* **University of Toronto**

For more information:

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