

About Field Projects

Stanford Graduate School of Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership Studies (POLS)

Overview

POLS is a nine-month, cohort-based Master's program in which students gain the knowledge, theoretical acumen, and hands-on experience necessary for effective leadership in a wide range of education enterprises. Through graduate coursework and capstone field projects, students hone skills of critical analysis, teamwork, and problem-solving. The program takes advantage of Stanford's strategic position as a global hub of innovation to develop mission-driven professionals.

The intent of the **field project** is to give students the opportunity to apply their training in theory and methods to real-world problems and settings.

Working in teams or individually, students spend approximately 150 hours working with an education-related business, school or university, research group, consulting firm, philanthropic organization or impact investor. Students may opt to pursue their projects from among a group of pre-arranged sites, or may negotiate their own site.

Field projects culminate in a defined "deliverable" by the end of the Spring quarter of each academic year. The deliverable can be a research report, a policy paper, a business plan, a curriculum, or other output that effectively demonstrates student accomplishment while also bringing tangible insight to the site. Students present synthetic summaries of their deliverables in a public conference at the end of each academic year.

As part of its commitment to the importance of this program, Stanford GSE provides weekly support to students throughout the duration of the field project in a credit-bearing seminar staffed jointly by GSE faculty and advanced doctoral students. Students meet weekly in the Winter and Spring quarters in field project labs to share progress and receive advice.

Scope of Work

Students and/or student teams are expected to work closely with designated site leaders to specify ambitious, actionable research projects of mutual value to students and sites. Scope of work is specified in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed jointly by the POLS student, a representative of the POLS program, and a representative of the site organization before 1 January of each year.

Timeline

Autumn Quarter (September - December)

- Site representatives present project opportunities to the POLS cohort
- Students/student teams identify one or two sites of interest to them
- Students work with POLS staff to determine field project teams
- Students and sites develop and commit to MoUs specifying scope of work, project schedule, deliverables and oversight

Winter Quarter (January – March)

- Student teams pursue field projects with oversight from designated site leaders
- Students enroll for units in a credit-bearing course (EDUC 210) overseen by POLS mentors

Spring Quarter (April – June)

- Student teams continue to pursue field projects with oversight from designated site leaders
- Students enroll for units in a credit-bearing course (EDUC 210) overseen by POLS mentors
- Students complete deliverables per MoU (in May) and present their work at the POLS conference (in June)

For more information

The POLS field project enables organizations to gain fresh insight, engage with an ambitious academic community, and mentor the next generation of education leaders. Contact Emi Kuboyama at kuboyama@stanford.edu to learn more.