

The Major Qualifying Project

The qualifying project in the major field of study should demonstrate application of the skills, methods, and knowledge of the discipline to the solution of a problem that would be representative of the type to be encountered in one's career. The project's content area should be carefully selected to complement the student's total educational program. In defining the project area within which a specific topic is to be selected, the student and academic advisor should pay particular attention to the interrelationships that will exist between the bodies of knowledge represented by courses, independent studies, and Preliminary Qualifying Projects; and by the Interactive Qualifying Projects.

MQP activities encompass research, development, and application, involve analysis or synthesis, are experimental or theoretical, emphasize a particular subarea of the major, or combine aspects of several subareas. In many cases, especially in engineering, MQPs involve capstone design activity. Long before final selection of a project topic, serious thought should be given as to which of these types of activities are to be included. Beyond these considerations, the MQP can also be viewed as an opportunity to publish or to gain experience in the business or public sectors.

Off-campus MQPs are also very valuable for access to state-of-the-art resources and contacts for future professional work.

Getting Started on an MQP

Project topics are originated by students, faculty, or practicing professionals participating in WPI's off-campus project programs. A faculty member in each academic department acts as Project Coordinator for all majors within the department. The Project Coordinator has assembled MQP topic descriptions being proposed and has identified the faculty who will serve as project advisors for each topic. All project opportunities-MQP, IQP, PQP, on-campus originated and off-campus originated are made available to the student body through a planned information-sharing program of activities during C and D terms of the academic year prior to the start of the project.

Project Proposals

Students are strongly encouraged to begin their MQPs with a project proposal. A detailed guide to preparing project proposals is available in department offices or on the Projects Program web page (<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/Projects/>).

MQP Learning Outcomes

By completing their MQP, WPI students will achieve the following learning outcomes at a level at least equivalent to that of an entry level professional or graduate student.

Students who complete a Major Qualifying Project will:

1. apply fundamental and disciplinary concepts and methods in ways appropriate to their principal areas of study.
2. demonstrate skill and knowledge of current information and technological tools and techniques specific to the professional field of study.
3. use effectively oral, written and visual communication.
4. identify, analyze, and solve problems creatively through sustained critical investigation.
5. integrate information from multiple sources.
6. demonstrate an awareness and application of appropriate personal, societal, and professional ethical standards.
7. practice the skills, diligence, and commitment to excellence needed to engage in lifelong learning.

Specific disciplinary programs may add additional MQP outcomes, such as design or mathematical skills or teamwork, as appropriate.

MQP Project Centers

Each project center has a WPI faculty member as the director, well-defined procedures for completing project work, and selective admissions processes. The Centers tend to be highly structured and require superior performance.

At the present time, the WPI project center close to campus is:

- University of Massachusetts Medical School Project Center/ Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine.

Major qualifying projects are available at nearby University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine (TUCSVM) for students from many disciplines on campus. These institutions are nationally recognized for research and medicine and offer project opportunities over a wide range of research areas. Students performing projects at these centers work in cutting edge research programs and typically interact with graduate and post-doctoral researchers to solve real-world problems.

It is recommended that students spread their projects over the entire academic year. Students from any major interested in project opportunities should contact Dr. Destin Heilman in the department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.