

2. Getting Started

The Projects and Registrar's office maintains a website dedicated to projects (<http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects>) which contains additional information about project requirements and getting started on projects.

Topic

To help choose a project and to help you assess whether or not it will meet your educational objectives, ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) Out of the IE, basic science, and mathematics course that you have taken, which did you enjoy the most? Which did you not enjoy? When answering these questions, try to identify project areas in which you would be willing to invest three terms of intensive work.
- 2) What do you want to do when you graduate? What type of company are you interested in working in? Try to be specific! Try attending local IIE meetings and student chapter meetings to find out more about what practicing IEs do. If you cannot specify what you want to do, try starting by figuring out what you are not interested in doing.
- 3) What do you want to learn while you work on your MQP? Your MQP is the equivalent of three courses and should let you explore new areas of interest and/or pursue in greater depth a topic you've addressed in coursework. If you tell your MQP advisor what you want to get out of your MQP, it is often possible to structure the project to emphasize those areas of interest.
- 4) Who do you want your project partners to be? Working with your best friend may either be the best or the worst decision you could make. Think about people who you have worked well with on group projects in classes and why they made good partners. Your partners' should complement your own, particularly if the project requires diverse abilities.

Process

Most IE MQPs are sponsored by an organization external to WPI. You can find out about project topics by visiting IE faculty to find out about the areas they advise projects in and any current projects they have proposed. In addition, you can check out the Directory of Available Projects at <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects/available.html>

You can also propose an MQP topic, perhaps sponsored by an organization where you completed a co-op or summer internship. If you do this, you need to first develop a clear idea of the educational goals and objectives of the project (it must be distinct from any work you have done as part of the co-op or internship). What makes you believe that

your idea would be a good project? What would you learn? Prepare a short description of the project (1-2 pages), which describes specific objectives and the general approach that will be used to attack the problem. Present your proposal to a faculty member to try to enlist them as an advisor.

Calendar

Because your choice of an MQP topic may influence your course selection and schedule for your senior year, you should plan to find an MQP in C- or D-term of your junior year if you are planning to start the project in A- or B-term. If you are going on co-op or plan to be at a project center to complete your IQP, you may need to work through project partners or select a project before you leave campus. If you are planning to start a project in C- or D-term, you should find an MQP during A-term.

Some opportunities to get started on finding an MQP:

Advising Appointment Day - Mid to Late February

No classes are scheduled to give you an opportunity to meet with your academic advisor to schedule senior year courses and your preferred time-frame for completing your MQP. This is also a good day to visit faculty to find out about MQPs they have proposed.

Project Presentation Day - Late April

No classes are held on Project Presentation Day. Students who are completing their MQPs present the results of their work to faculty and project sponsors. All students are invited to attend the presentations; it is a good way to see what past projects have involved and to learn about faculty expectations for MQPs.