Texas MBA+ Project Program / Client Expectations Guide / Fall 2016

The Texas MBA+ Program offers students the opportunity to gain practical experience during their MBA program by facilitating co-curricular projects at client organizations. The program is built upon the concept of Project Based Learning where students are guided through an extended process of inquiry in response to a complex question, problem, or challenge. Projects are carefully planned, managed, and assessed to help students learn key academic content, practice critical leadership skills, and create high-quality deliverables and presentations.

The following expectations are provided to project clients to ensure the best possible experience for everyone involved.

**Project Scope**
Projects are expected to be of a very specific, tangible, immediate, and relevant business issue. The project scope should be feasible for a team of 4-6 Texas MBAs to complete within 120-200 total team hours. If the team is smaller than 4-6 students, the project scope should be reduced accordingly. Clients should understand that the project proposal submitted will be revised once a team is in place. Project proposals are discussed, negotiated, and revised by the client and MBA+ team so that a satisfactory deliverable may be achieved within the available timeframe while taking into account the skillset of the team members. **Project deliverables should not be mission critical or extremely time sensitive.** Though it is rare, on occasion teams have lost members or had other set-backs that have required a renegotiation of the project scope with the client during the project timeline.

**Team Selection**
The Texas MBA+ program is open to all Texas MBA students and is an excellent opportunity for students to explore new industries and functional areas. Many of our students are career switchers and are seeking new experiences. We ask our clients take this into consideration when selecting a project team. Clients should be open to teams with diverse backgrounds. In addition, though your company may not hire international students, we still ask that clients are open to teams with international students. These students bring a fresh perspective to project teams. We do understand that for a limited number of our clients, confidentiality and/or security restrictions preclude you from accepting teams with international students. Please ensure this requirement is clearly stated in your project proposal.
**Project Organization**

Clients should identify at least two employees to serve as the MBA+ project team’s primary contacts. Project team interaction is expected to be largely with the primary contacts, but may include other client stakeholders as needed. Primary contacts should expect to dedicate approximately 1-2 hours per week meeting with the MBA+ team, responding to questions, and providing necessary data.

Project teams will select a team lead who will serve as the liaison between the team and the client. The team lead will be responsible for scheduling calls or meetings and ensuring team communication adheres to the agreed schedule (as determined during the launch meeting).

Projects are overseen by the MBA+ office with day-to-day management handled by the student project leader. The project leader should keep the client primary contacts apprised of key achievements and activities. MBA+ project leaders and clients should inform the MBA+ office immediately if concerns arise throughout the project. Contact Deidra Stephens at deidra.stephens@mccombs.utexas.edu with any questions or concerns.

**Project Timeline**

The proposed timeline for fall 2016 projects is approximately nine weeks, running from September 19 to November 23. We recommend teams complete their work and prepare their final deliverable before the Thanksgiving holiday.

This time estimate is dependent on the MBA+ project team having access to resources required in a timely manner. **It is the client’s responsibility to have any Non-Disclosure Agreements ready for the team to sign by the launch meeting and to provide necessary data to the team within five business days of the launch meeting.** Should roadblocks occur that could impact the project timeline or deliverables, the MBA+ project team will notify the client so that a resolution can be reached. The client should be aware that there may be student academic or personal circumstances that arise that impact the project. In this situation, the project team and MBA+ staff will notify and work with the client to find a satisfactory solution. The team should inform you of any time commitment issues and set a timeline that works for both the team and the client. Regardless of circumstances, all projects must be completed by December 9 or they will be terminated.

**Week of September 12-16:**

- Project team and leader finalized.
- Project leader may schedule a meeting with the client to ask questions about the project scope and gather insight on client’s project goals.
- Project team meets with their Texas MBA+ coach to discuss team goals, project scope, deliverables prior to launch meeting with client.
- Launch meeting with client scheduled.

**Week of September 19-23:**

- Launch meeting with client conducted.
- Project scope, deliverables, and timeline agreed upon.
- Client forwards data, contacts, and other information needed for project completion.

**Weeks of September 26-October 21:**
- Project team works toward project completion. During this time, the client can expect to be in regular contact with the project team and should be available to answer questions and provide additional data.

**Week of October 24-28:**
- MBA+ staff will request feedback from both project team and client regarding status of the project and any obstacles to date.
- Project team may deliver a mid-point presentation to client to ensure that the team is on the right track. This is not required as part of the project process.

**Weeks of October 31-November 18:**
- Project team works toward project completion. During this time, the client can expect to be in regular contact with the project team and should be available to answer questions and provide additional data.

**Week of November 21-23 or November 28-December 2:**
- Project team delivers a final presentation to the client project stakeholders and transfers all delivery materials and project knowledge to client. Ideal completion date is November 20.

**Week of December 12-16:**
- MBA+ staff will request feedback from both project team and client regarding project outcome.

**Project Termination**
In some cases, the MBA+ team or the client may wish to terminate the project. Prior to making this decision, the MBA+ project team and/or client should contact MBA+ staff to try to resolve issues. These resolutions include but are not limited to renegotiating the project scope and deliverables, extending the project timeline, adding or terminating team members, naming new client contacts, etc.

If an acceptable resolution cannot be found, either party may terminate the project by giving seven days written notice to the other party. Projects will automatically terminate on December 11 regardless of whether work was completed.

**Project Fees**
There are no fees to participate in the MBA+ Project Program. Students who participate in projects are not paid. They hope to meet and network with members of the client organization and to gain transferable skills including project management, conflict resolution, managing ambiguity, problem-solving, innovative thinking, and leadership. They gain valid experience they can reference on their
resume and stories for the behavioral interview questions they will face during their search for post-
MBA employment. Moreover, Texas MBA+ projects provide students who are interested in changing
careers the opportunity to see if the functional area and type of company are a good fit before making a
longer term commitment in the form of a summer internship or full-time employment.

Clients are expected to pay for any resources the client requires to ensure a successful project outcome.
These expenses include but are not limited to access to research databases and project specific
information (not accessible through the University library), resources for primary research (though we
discourage primary research), office expenses such as copies, etc. Clients should consider these
uncovered expenses when writing a project proposal particularly if they are interested in students
performing basic primary research.

The MBA+ program supports face-to-face networking opportunities between MBA teams and clients
through travel and client meal funds. Clients may be asked by the student team to cover a portion of
their expenses for project-related travel. Participation in the project program is not contingent on clients
providing these funds. However, if it is possible for the company to cover some or all of these expenses,
the university requests that they do so.

**Legal Relationship**

Clients should create their own Non-Disclosure Agreements if required. These should be signed prior to
the launch meeting so that they do not hold up the project timeline. We have recommended project
launches no later than the week of September 21st. We request any clients requiring teams to sign NDAs
have these documents available to the team prior to the launch meeting.

**Intellectual Property:** Any deliverables developed by the MBA+ project team are owned by the client.

**Fair Labor Standards Act (FSLA):** The MBA+ project program meets the criteria to be excluded from the
FSLA. (See [http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf).)

**Liability:** Neither the client, MBA+ program, nor the students shall be liable to the others for any
indirect, consequential, incidental, or punitive damages arising out of the project.

**Use of Name/Marks:** Neither the client, MBA+ program, nor students shall be authorized to use the
name or marks of the other parties in any advertisement, press release or other public statement
without the written permission of the other parties, which shall not be unreasonably withheld. The
parties anticipate recognition of their business relationship in the students’ resumes and job interviews
as well as all parties’ respective websites or promotional materials, but no party is expected to make any
qualitative endorsement of the others.