

Vapaaehtoisjärjestöprojekti

Non-governmental organization project

GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

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Welcome to the NGO project course

Congratulations, you have found a suitable project from the world of NGOs!

The non-governmental organization (NGO) project, which will be piloted for the first time in the academic year 2022-23, is aimed at improving project expertise, skills in one's own field, and knowledge of the NGO world. The projects stem from a genuine need to develop the activities of the organizations, so your work is truly meaningful.

The project requires self-initiative and flexibility from students, and, of course, expertise in the topic area. Undertaking a project will bring you close to working life and is a great way to increase work life skills. Projects are also an excellent way to gain valuable work experience for your CV and build your professional reputation.

The organizations expect students to act professionally and work independently, but of course they understand that you are just at the beginning of your career. You (together with the other students in your group) have a big responsibility in completing the project in a quality manner. However, you are not alone in the project. In your work, you will be supported by the academic supervisor and the project coordinator. Together, we strive to support you in your work from the beginning to the end of the project.

Once again, congratulations and welcome!

Kind regards,

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Read more: [Aalto University School of Business - Collaboration](#)

Some basic information on NGO projects

Employment relationship in NGO project

The student is not employed by the organization or the school. Therefore, the benefits and obligations of the employment relationship are not valid for the duration of the project.

If a student falls ill, he/she uses the services of YTHS. The student is also not insured during the project by the School of Business. If the student needs insurance for e.g. a trip abroad, the student will negotiate with the client organization about taking an insurance.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, no written contract is made between the School of Business and the students regarding the project.

The amount of work required for the project

The 6 credits obtained from the project correspond to approx. 162 hours of work per student. The project is done part-time alongside studies. If you notice that the workload is increasing significantly, contact the project supervisor.

Costs resulting from the project

The expenses arising from the project will be reimbursed to the students. Such expenses include, for example, travel expenses and material acquisition costs. The student first pays these expenses him-/herself and receives a refund from the organization.

To receive the money, the student must provide the organization the required documents and receipts.

All expenses must be approved by the organization in advance.

Rights to project results and confidentiality

It is highly recommended that the student and the NGO discuss the need for agreements for a) non-disclosure and/or b) transferring rights. Aalto University School of Business is not a contracting party in these. The coordinator will provide a model for the non-disclosure agreement to the student if needed.

Roles and responsibilities in an NGO project

Students

- Bear sole responsibility for the implementation of the project
- Do high-level research/consulting work in a professional manner
- Share the workload evenly in the group (if the project is done as a group)
- Communicate effectively between all parties
- Are responsible for the completion of the work on schedule
- Write a research/project plan as well as interim and final reports
- Present the results to NGO representatives
- Write a public article about the project at the end of the project (for aalto.fi and the organization's channels)

Supervisor

- Monitors that the work is of high quality
- Monitors that the project corresponds the set standards of the course (topic and extent)
- Guides students in conducting the project (how to proceed, what to do next, etc.)
- Coaches the student/group in matters that require analytical and methodological skills
- Ensures that the work is completed on schedule
- Reads, comments and finally approves the research plan as well as the interim and final reports written by the student(s)

Project coordinator

- Finds the suitable supervisor for the project
- Keeps track of all the ongoing projects
- Helps all parties in practical matters
- Supports the completion of work on schedule
- Publishes the project outcome (the article) and grants the credits

Non-governmental organization

- Is the client of the project
- Proposes the research problem and together with the student / group of students agrees on the implementation of the research
- Provides the agreed data and materials

- Attends all the project meetings (kick-off, follow-up and final meeting) and can be contacted between the meetings as agreed with the student.

Even if the organization is very active in the project, it does not lead the project. In relation to the student, the organization is the customer, not the employer. The supervisor and the responsible teacher have the final decision-making power over the implementation of the project.

The phases of the project

The topic of the project

The student can find the topic and the NGO client for the project proactively, for example through his/her own hobbies or other contacts. The NGOs can also promote suitable topics for a project in Aalto's JobTeaser. The organization selects the most suitable student / group of students to conduct the project.

The topic is initially approved by the coordinator, after which he/she looks for a suitable academic supervisor for the project. The project will be undertaken if a suitable supervisor is found for the topic. The topic/scope may be made a little more specific or narrow after the supervisor familiarizes him/herself with it and the client accepts the changes.

First meeting i.e. Kick-off

In the meeting, the organization usually presents its activities and the problem to be solved. Students are not expected to know specifics about it in advance, but it is good to at least familiarize yourself with the organization's website before the meeting. The student should also prepare to tell something about him/herself.

The dress code is the so-called business casual, e.g. neat trousers/skirt and a collared shirt or blouse.

Project plan

After the kick-off meeting, the students write a project plan. The plan includes e.g. the content and schedule of the project (see appendix 1).

The plan binds the project team, so it should be done carefully. The plan can only be sent to the customer after the instructor has approved it. If the client wants changes to the project plan, the supervisor must approve them.

During the project

Working methods vary greatly depending on the project. Usually, the project group meets with the supervisor every couple of weeks. Contact with the NGO can vary from a couple of meetings to a very intense relationship.

Mid-term meeting

The mid-term meeting is held in the middle stages of the project. The students, the instructor, coordinator and representatives of the organization all participate. At the meeting, the current results and progress are presented with a power point presentation or similar tool. The supervisor must approve the interim report materials before the presentation. The mid-term meeting is held at the School of Business or at the organization's premises. In order to avoid technical difficulties, students should make sure that they have a back-up on the slide show (e.g. on a memory stick) in addition to their own computer and that the room has the necessary equipment to present their findings. If the meeting is held virtually/in hybrid mode, make sure your mic and camera work properly and your internet connection is excellent.

Final stages

At least two weeks before the end of the project, the students send a report to the academic supervisor. Once the report has been approved, it can also be sent to the customer. The students send the client a raw draft of their work approved by the supervisor well in advance in order to avoid last minute rush and stress.

There are usually always corrections to the report, so remember to schedule time for final touches. The final report and/or project results are reviewed with the customer at the final meeting. If the customer is satisfied with the results of the project, the project can be officially concluded at the final meeting. However, it is good to be prepared that the customer may still wish to have amendments for the work.

The project ends when the customer has approved the final report or 14 days have passed since the report was sent to the customer (complaint period).

Final report

The format of the final report depends on the organization and can vary from a set of slides to a 160-page report. The general output is a report of approx. 25 pages and a set of slides.

Cover: Ask the project coordinator for a template

Line spacing 1.5 (or 1 if necessary)

Margins 2.5 cm

Page number down to the center (makes printing easier)

FOREWORD (while thanking for the cooperation, we give information about who has been working on the project)

Example:

The purpose of this project is to find out ways that help the commitment of young members and to create an operating model for utilizing them. Aalto University School of Business Master’s student N.N. from the Management study program implemented the project between October 2022 and January 2023. The project was commissioned by the Example Organization ry. and its supervisor was Väinö Virtanen (KTT), a researcher at the Aalto University School of Business. The project was coordinated by Senior Manager Annemari Rautio from the External Relations team.

The authors of the study and the supervisor would like to thank all the people who participated in the study.

Best thanks also to the client's representatives, member coordinator Mika Miettinen, organization secretary Salla Sallinen and executive director Ossi Oikarinen for the good and rewarding cooperation.

In Espoo February 3, 2023

N.N.

Executive summary

At the beginning of the report is a one-page summary of the project's results. This should be done carefully, as the abstract is read the most.

News article on the project

Students write a news article about the NGO project to be published on aalto.fi and in the communication channels of the organization that commissioned the assignment. It is good to include the comments of both the supervisor and the representative of the organization in the news. It is also good to use a photo to liven up the story.

What can be published in public channels needs to be agreed with the NGO. Perhaps you cannot state anything specific publicly about the detailed results, but it's important to include something about the contents and findings in the news. In some cases, the project is so confidential that the news cannot be published. However, it must be written and returned to the coordinator, as it is a prerequisite for the credits. The student also gets visibility professionally which can be helpful when applying for a job.

Communicating

How to communicate about the project to outsiders

The students conduct a School of Business project for a collaborating organization. At times, students have used the title “project researcher”. It is worth discussing with the supervisor what is the best way to present yourself, e.g. in an interview situation. The content of the projects is usually confidential, and the students sign a non-disclosure agreement if needed. What can be told about the project to outsiders should be agreed with the client in the first (kick-off) meeting. As a rule of thumb, you can always tell people anything that was written in the published news article or the recruitment ad in JobTeaser (if there was one).

How students contact the organization

Students can keep in direct contact with the organization. In larger project groups, it is good to choose one student who primarily handles the communication. The communication methods should be agreed with the client at the beginning of the project.

If changes are made to the content or implementation of the project (requires the supervisor's consent) that differ from the project plan, the coordinator must also be informed about it. A good way is to add the coordinator in cc to e-mails regarding the changes.

What to do when the customer does not respond to the sent message quickly enough

This is everyday life in business. You shouldn't get anxious about it but try again. It is important to keep a polite tone even in challenging situations. It's not worth twiddling your thumbs, but rather think about what project-related work you can do during the waiting period. If the situation continues, contact the supervisor and project coordinator.

To conclude

Credits

When the instructor has approved the project's final report and the news about the projects has been published, the project coordinator will enter the credits (6 ECTS) into the register. The project is evaluated with a grade of pass/fail, course code BIZ-E0110. The NGO project can be found as an optional course in all Master's programs of the Aalto University School of Business. More detailed information can be found in MyCourses. The credits will be entered in the register no later than one month after the end of the project. If the student

needs the credits to be registered earlier, it is a good idea to tell the coordinator about this in advance.

Feedback

At the end of the project, the project coordinator sends the students a link through which they can give feedback anonymously. We also ask for feedback from the NGO and the academic supervisor.

APPENDIX 1: Project plan – example on content

1. Purpose of the document
2. Task description
 - 2.1 Background
 - 2.2 Project’s goal(s)
 - 2.3 Project’s tasks
 - 2.4 Project’s limits/boundaries
 - 2.5 Deliverables
 - 2.6 Customer’s responsibilities
3. Project timetable
4. Risk Analysis
5. Project organization, staffing and contact persons
 - 5.1 Project Supervisors
 - 5.2 Project Team members
- 6.0 Documentation