

# Request for Experiential Learning Opportunity (ELO) Proposals: IAP + Spring 2021

On July 7, 2020, President Reif announced that MIT “will offer each student, whether remote or on-campus, a paid undergraduate research, teaching or service opportunity, with a stipend up to \$1,900.” The FAQ accompanying his email elaborated on this, explaining that “Recognizing that securing employment opportunities could be more difficult, MIT has developed remote research, public service, and teaching experiences that will provide every undergraduate student a guaranteed paid opportunity next year. These experiential learning opportunities will be available to every undergraduate student, whether remote or in-person, through programs such as UROP, UTOP, MISTI, PKG, Open Learning, or Sandbox.”

The Institute has committed significant financial support to facilitate these undergraduate experiences. The current proposal process will make funding commitments to programs offering experiential learning opportunities in IAP and/or Spring 2021.

Please read this RFP carefully before completing your proposal; see the [Program FAQ page](#) of the ELO website for more information.

## CRITERIA

Institute funding is available to support experiential learning opportunities (ELOs) for MIT undergraduates that meet most of the following criteria:

1. **Hands-on/Applied Approach:** opportunity to apply learning in a real-world context (including remote engagements)
2. **Rigorous Academic Content/Focus:** clear learning outcomes that connect to and advance MIT educational pathways and students’ professional aspirations
3. **Dedicated and Expert Guidance/Advising/Supervision:** frequent, supportive, and constructive feedback from faculty sponsors, graduate student mentors, partner organization staff members, etc.
4. **Meaningful Intensity and Duration:** students should dedicate at least 70 hours and up to 140 hours to their ELO
5. **Reflection and Evaluation:** [critical reflection](#) is intentionally incorporated into the ELO; there is a plan to measure the program’s effectiveness (student learning, community impact, etc.)

Special consideration will be given to:

- Projects with a focus on **social change** (e.g., COVID response, racial justice, climate change).
- Projects designed for or focused specifically on **first-year students**. Projects for first-year students should emphasize exploration and community-building; cohort-based opportunities with significant training, mentoring, and professional development components are ideal. First-year-focused opportunities may involve fewer hours per week and span multiple terms (IAP + spring) to limit students' workload during their first year.

See Appendix A (below) for more information on the eligibility of **undergraduate teaching assistant (UG TA) or lab assistant (UG LA) positions** for the AY21 experiential learning guarantee.

## FUNDING

### For Students:

- DLCs and programs may apply for a **minimum of 5 non-UROP ELOs** or a **minimum of 10 UROPs**. We encourage consolidated departmental requests (e.g., proposals that include multiple projects, PIs, and programs). Applications for fewer than 10 UROPs will be accepted through the regular UROP direct funding process.
- During AY21, students are eligible to earn up to \$1900 in an ELO, supported by central guarantee funding or UROP direct funding. This may take the form of an hourly wage (UROP) or a stipend (all other ELOs).
- The UROP minimum hourly wage will increase to \$13.50 on January 1, 2021 (consistent with the increase in Massachusetts' minimum wage). Programs wishing to pay higher wages or stipends will need to arrange to do so from their own funding sources.
- Students who have already satisfied their ELO guarantee in the fall term through central funding (i.e., funding awarded through this RFP process) or UROP direct funding are NOT eligible for a second centrally-funded ELO. However, they may participate in ELOs if paid by other funding sources (e.g., program endowment, faculty discretionary budget).
- UROP positions will count towards the maximum of 20 hours per week that international undergraduate students can work for pay.
- Due to international tax and compliance issues, MIT is not able to offer paid UROPs or other hourly wage opportunities (regardless of funding source) to undergraduate students who are physically located outside of the United States, regardless of citizenship.
- Only students who are invited back to campus and living in MIT Housing are eligible for in-person ELOs on MIT's campus (or in related facilities like the Broad or Lincoln Labs). Receipt of an ELO is not a guarantee that campus access for in-person ELO project work will be approved.

### For Program Capacity and Other Expenses:

- Programs are expected to contribute to the costs of these opportunities as they are able.
- Modest funds may be available to support some essential non-student expenses, such as program capacity; supplies, equipment, or postage costs (e.g., for shipping kits to students at home); or other expenses. These non-student expenses may not exceed 10% of the total student expense request and are subject to funding availability.

## PROJECT PERIOD

- ELOs may take place during IAP or the Spring semester or both. ELOs must end no later than the last day of exams for the spring semester.
- IAP may be a standalone project period or serve as a “running start” to extend the length of a Spring semester project.

## STUDENT TRACKING

- We are tracking student ELO participation to allow us to reach out to students who have not yet participated. Program staff will enter or upload participating student information into the new ELO tracking database (elo-tracking.mit.edu). [Roles authorization to the database will be granted after notification of awards.]

## ADDITIONAL REVIEW FOR SELECT INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

- You must complete and submit this shortened [online intake form](#) for each affected student only if your DLC is supervising or offering a UROP or ELO that involves MIT students conducting work in, or collaborating with people or entities from, any of the following countries or regions: Iran, Syria, Cuba, North Korea, the Crimea region of Ukraine, China (including Hong Kong), Russia, or Saudi Arabia. Please note that UROP or ELO work to be conducted in Iran, Syria, Cuba, North Korea, or the Crimea region of Ukraine **may not proceed** until advanced approval following the additional review is received.

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- Once your program concludes, you will submit a brief report that includes a summary of notable accomplishments and learnings and a breakdown of expenditures. (We will provide a report template.)
- Any guarantee funding left unspent by May 31, 2021 may not be carried forward. The account will be closed, and any unspent funds must be returned at the conclusion of your program.

# Proposal Format

Using [this Google Form](#), fill in the information outlined below, upload your proposal narrative, and submit by 5pm on November 13, 2020.

## A. Background and Contact Information

- Project Title
- Sponsoring Department, Lab, or Center (DLC)
- PI or Responsible Faculty/Staff Member (lead program instructor/supervisor/manager)
- Financial Staff Member (person who will manage accounts and process transactions)
- Other Staff Member(s) (to be copied on ELO communications for awareness)
- Received ELO funding in Fall 2020? Yes (account #) / No

## B. Request

- Term (IAP only, IAP & Spring, Spring only)
- # ELOs Requested (minimum of 5 non-UROP ELOs; minimum of 10 UROPs)
- Cost per ELO (hourly wage or stipend)
- Estimated Total Hours per Student (70 to 140 hours)
- Non-Student Expenses Requested (may not exceed 10% of total student expenses; subject to funding availability)

## C. Program Categories & Tags

Help us promote opportunities to students by indicating which of the categories below apply to your ELO program.

- Global Opportunities
- Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- Public Service & Social Impact
- Research (UROP)
- Teaching & Learning (UTOP)
- First Years

## D. Proposal Narrative (upload PDF)

After entering the required information outlined above, please upload your proposal narrative to the Google Form as a PDF document . Keep your submission brief; 2-3 pages should suffice for a typical proposal. Please include the following elements in your proposal:

1. Describe the ELOs to be created/offered. What kind of activities will students take part in? What type of deliverables will they produce?
2. What are the "real-world" elements of the experience (e.g., application of research; projects scoped by an external partner organization; preparing policy brief for elected officials; etc.)?

3. Articulate the intended learning outcomes and educational benefits for students. How will these outcomes be achieved?
4. How will the students be supervised? By whom? How will students receive regular feedback on their work and performance?
5. How will you incorporate opportunities for individual and group reflection into your ELO?
6. How will student learning and project impact be assessed or measured?
7. Explain which students will be eligible and/or what qualifications and experience will be required of student applicants (e.g., first-years only; Course 6 majors; prior teaching experience necessary).

## Proposal Deadline, Funding Decisions, & Questions

Proposals should be submitted via Google Form no later than **5 pm on Friday, November 13, 2020.**

An ad hoc funding committee composed of staff, faculty, and students will review all proposals. Funding award decisions will be announced no later than Monday, December 7, 2020.

If you have any questions, please email [oei@mit.edu](mailto:oei@mit.edu).

## APPENDIX A:

### Guidance on Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UG TA) and Lab Assistant (UG LA) Positions

Several faculty members have inquired about the eligibility of undergraduate teaching assistant (UG TA) or lab assistant (UG LA) positions for the AY21 experiential learning “guarantee.” As noted in the [Fall 2020 FAQ](#):

“All undergraduates, remote or on campus, will have the opportunity for a paid UROP, teaching opportunity, or public service opportunity through the PKG Center. These experiential learning opportunities will be available to every undergraduate student, whether remote or in-person, through programs such as UROP, MISTI, PKG, Open Learning, or Sandbox, and will offer a stipend of up to \$1,900. The guarantee is for one semester but does not prevent students from earning more in that semester or engaging in more than one experiential learning opportunity.”

The guarantee is not merely a guarantee of paid employment but of a funded [experiential learning opportunity](#). Below, we provide more specific guidance for departments that want to develop experiential learning opportunities that focus on teaching.

Institute funding is available to support student opportunities that meet most of the following criteria. Proposals for funding to support undergraduate teaching and lab assistants should clearly articulate how the parameters below are addressed.

1. **Hands-on/Applied Approach:** *opportunity to apply learning in a real-world context*

- ✓ The UG TA or LA position is designed to “teach about teaching” and improve the UG TA/LA’s teaching skills and knowledge through independent and collaborative practice and active experimentation and iteration. For example...
  - The UG TA/LA develops, revises, and delivers curriculum modules.
  - The UG TA/LA develops and tests software or simulation tools for use in the classroom or lab. The UG TA/LA conducts experiments, collects feedback data from class users, makes modifications, and re-deploys.
  - A team of UG TA/LAs creates course videos to replace a lecture or complement an experiment, strategizing on the best way to pedagogically present material and visually explain key concepts.

2. **Rigorous Academic Content/Focus:** *clear learning outcomes that connect to and advance MIT educational pathways and students’ professional aspirations*

- ✓ The UG TA/LA position is designed to be an educational or developmental experience for the UG TA/LA (and not merely the students enrolled in the course). Learning outcomes for the UG TA/LA are clearly articulated and meaningfully advanced by the projects and assignments performed by the UG TA/LA.

Administrative and other tasks like grading assignments, posting links to Canvas, and/or monitoring the chat or discussion forum in an online course should account for less than half of the UG TA/LA’s total contact hours.

3. **Dedicated and Expert Guidance/Advising/Supervision:** *frequent, supportive, and constructively critical feedback from faculty sponsors, graduate student mentors, experienced staff members of an external partner organization, etc.*

- ✓ The faculty member or instructor leading the class provides frequent and substantial expert guidance, support, and feedback to the UG TA/LA. For example...
- The UG TA/LA and faculty member meet weekly to go over recitation plans, curriculum modules, or coaching/mentoring approaches.
  - The faculty member regularly observes the UG TA leading recitations or the UG LA doing lab checkoffs or coaching/troubleshooting with students and provides timely, concrete, and constructive feedback to improve performance.
  - Feedback is both informal and formal/documented.

4. **Meaningful Intensity and Duration:** *students should dedicate at least 80 hours (e.g., 8 hours/week for 10 weeks) and up to a maximum of 140 hours (e.g., 10 hours/week for 14 weeks) to their project*

5. **Reflection and Evaluation:** *critical reflection is intentionally incorporated into the project or opportunity; plan to measure the program's effectiveness (in terms of student learning, community impact, etc.)*

- ✓ The UG TA/LA is expected to formally reflect on their work as part of their experience. The UG TA/LA's performance is evaluated by the faculty member, both informally through regular feedback and discussions and formally in an end-of-semester review. For example...
- The UG TA/LA writes a series of reflection essays over the course of his/her experience to highlight the most important learning from the experience and outline areas for future development.
  - The UG TA/LA produces a memo written to future UG TA/LAs of the same course in order to pass on advice and suggestions for future improvements.
  - The UG TA/LA produces and presents a culminating deliverable at the end of the semester such as a poster for a poster session.
  - UG TA/LAs participate in a professional learning community, meeting with faculty and graduate students mentors, peers, and other practitioners regularly to share reflections and gain additional guidance and feedback from each other.