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DUKE UNIVERSITY FUQUA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS:
**FUQUA CLIENT CONSULTING
PRACTICUM (FCCP)**

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Fuqua School of Business has offered consulting practicum courses to students in the MBA program for more than 30 years. [The Fuqua Client Consulting Practicum](#) (FCCP) is the latest iteration of this legacy and represents an integration of several consulting courses into one program, allowing students to access a broad set of project opportunities and learning content through one course.

FCCP is a for-credit experiential learning course designed to assist Fuqua students in developing business consulting skills by applying content learned in their graduate coursework to real challenges facing businesses and other community-based organizations. Students work in small teams alongside classmates in the same program and use the consulting process to structure the business problem, define the work scope, conduct research or analysis and present their findings to the client. With faculty guidance and the support of a former FCCP student serving as a mentor, the project culminates in a final presentation to the client that captures the team's analysis, insights and actionable recommendations. Through this work, students deepen their industry-specific, function-specific and country-specific business content knowledge.

The course emphasizes developing the following skills:

- Identifying and understanding the needs of an organization (the client)
- Engaging with the client to develop a project plan to address the client's needs
- Working with the client to complete the project activities
- Influencing client decision-makers with written documents and oral discussions
- Adapting to feedback and challenges over the length of the course

QUICK FACTS

Year founded: **2012**

Project source: **External clients**

Duration: **6-16 weeks**

Students per year: **400**

Interdisciplinary: **Yes**

Vertical integration: **No**

MMS	Daytime MBA	Executive MBA
Students: ~250	Students: ~130	Students: ~70
48 Project teams 24 Engagement Managers	30 Project teams 15 MBA Fellows	15 Project teams 15 Alumni Mentors
2 credit core course	6 credit elective	3 credit elective
Timing: Fall 2 - EMs Spring 1 - MMS teams	Timing: Spring 1 & 2	Timing: Term 3 (mainly) January - June

FCCP is offered in three of Fuqua’s degree-conferring programs — [Master of Management Studies \(MMS\)](#), [Daytime MBA](#) and [Executive MBA](#) — and iterations differ in terms of student experience, start/completion times and academic credit (pictured above).

During the summer project-sourcing months, FCCP program staff solicit applications from diverse client organizations that align with [Fuqua’s Centers](#), reflecting student interest areas. All project proposals undergo thorough vetting by the FCCP program office. In the Daytime MBA FCCP program, an additional layer of vetting occurs by a team of second-year MBA students (Fellows) that conduct diligence calls with one to two clients each to determine the final selection of projects presented to the first-year MBA students.

For the mandatory MMS FCCP program, 12 projects are pre-selected and assigned to student teams. The process varies slightly for the MBA programs, where FCCP is an elective. For those programs, in the fall, qualified projects are presented to MBA students, who then apply to FCCP by indicating their project preferences, providing a brief statement of interest and listing any relevant skills or expertise. The FCCP program office conducts a team formation process, matching students to projects and announcing the results. Students have 24 hours to accept or decline their place on the project team.

Once the projects are staffed and students are enrolled, teams schedule a team-building dinner and conduct a kickoff call with their clients before launching into formal coursework and project activities.

Faculty Advisors play a crucial role in the FCCP program and oversee several project teams in their section. They teach a series of classes and are actively engaged in student teams’ progress throughout the project. They meet regularly with their project teams to provide guidance and collaborate with Fellows to identify issues and concerns.

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See a selection of [student blogs](#) on the breadth and depth of project opportunities.

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RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATIVE MODEL

FCCP is one of the largest [experiential learning programs](#) at Fuqua, enrolling over 400 Fuqua students each year. A limited number of graduate students from professional schools such as the Nicholas School of the Environment and Sanford School of Public Policy are also eligible to enroll in FCCP; however, they must obtain permission from the registrar at their home school. FCCP is operated by a small team of staff and faculty in the Experiential Learning Office and is overseen by faculty co-directors Jim Emery and Pranab Majumder. While not an academic department or a Fuqua Center, FCCP is a program office that reports up to the senior associate dean.

The FCCP program is supported primarily through tuition, although it does generate some revenue from client fees which help offset certain costs such as team-building events, Fellow/Engagement Manager stipends and Experiential Learning software. FCCP also operates with the help of several third-party resources to ensure a valuable student learning experience.

- Faculty Advisors teach a series of classes and support the project teams in their section through regular meetings and problem-solving sessions.
- Fellows and Engagement Managers are second-year MBA students in paid teaching assistant positions that assist their project teams by sharing insights from their experience in the program, navigating early client conversations, facilitating team development discussions and being another resource for project-related questions.
- Fuqua's technology support staff creates the academic program pages for the FCCP courses in Canvas and administers course evaluations through the platform.
- [EduSourced](#) is a project-based experiential learning platform that integrates with Canvas and allows the FCCP faculty and program staff to support projects through the full lifecycle, from client proposal to facilitating secure file sharing, 360 peer surveys and assignment submissions.
- Key individuals within Fuqua's Center departments ([CASE](#), [EDGE](#), [HSM](#), [I&E](#)) help to source projects from within their network and bolster the quality of project submissions across student interest areas.

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Students report an overall high level of satisfaction with the course. Survey data support the stated goal that FCCP helps develop and refine skills that business school students find helpful in their summer internships and careers. Yet, program improvement and innovation remain crucial for FCCP to stay relevant as students navigate an ever-changing business landscape.

The features of the program that are important to its success are also the areas the FCCP program office monitors closely for improvement:

PROJECT SOURCING: The FCCP program office receives over 100 client applications annually, of which approximately 60 will be matched with a student team. To source this amount of quality projects, FCCP partners with Fuqua's Centers and the Alumni Relations team. These partnerships act as a force multiplier to increase the visibility of FCCP to greater networks, highlight the value of the Fuqua MBA program and provide a meaningful way for alumni to engage with students. Program staff actively participate in outreach, assessing initial client fit before Fellows and Engagement Managers (EMs) complete the next step of conducting due diligence calls and finalizing the projects. This process is intended to ensure the selected projects are suitable for Fuqua students in FCCP and achievable within the timeframe, not just external research projects.

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Through the FCCP program, students learn to identify challenges, develop project plans, collaborate with clients and apply feedback.

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TEAM FORMATION AND STRUCTURE: Effective teamwork is essential for successful and efficient consulting engagement, so considerable effort goes into team formation, support and development. At the team formation stage, the program office uses an algorithm and input from faculty/fellows to form diverse teams of five students. Project teams also benefit from having at least one student with consulting experience and relevant sector knowledge, which is factored into team formation where possible. Once finalized, teams participate in a formal team-building activity (Team Charter), get an opportunity to give and receive feedback from their peers (360 Evaluation), and then meet as a team to discuss project performance and include any course corrections in their revised team charter. Teams also receive support from a Fellow or Engagement Manager, as outlined previously, and students also provide feedback about their Fellow or Engagement Manager and faculty.

FELLOW/ENGAGEMENT MANAGER TRAINING: These second-year MBA students learn valuable consulting leadership skills and gain experience advising a team in a "Junior Partner" capacity. A Faculty Advisor conducts required training sessions to assist these students in developing the skills to coach and mentor teams well. Training sessions are usually scheduled during mealtime (lunch or dinner) to facilitate organic networking and impromptu problem-solving opportunities with faculty.

PROGRAM DESIGN WORKSHOPS: After projects are complete, there are several opportunities to debrief on the course, reflect on learnings and provide input for program improvement. The last FCCP class of the program is dedicated time for students to debrief and reflect with the faculty. Fellows and Engagement Managers also participate in a program design workshop where feedback is incorporated into the Fellows/EM program in the coming year. Clients also get an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience with a project team through a formal survey. Finally, the FCCP staff and faculty engage in a debriefing session synthesizing

relevant topics from other sessions. One outcome of this meeting is the creation of working groups of faculty and staff who undertake identified program improvement initiatives over the summer to implement in the upcoming academic year.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AS A CORE PHILOSOPHY: The FCCP program is grounded in the core principles of project-based, experiential learning, which are integral to its design. While real clients are invested in the outcomes of the student projects, the FCCP program emphasizes the educational experience over the consulting engagement. In this course, students are counseled to expect to apply their skills to real-world projects, encounter ambiguity, struggle with defining a work scope, experience uncomfortable emotions, develop leadership skills and have an opportunity to learn through reflection.

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The FCCP program has faced several challenges over the years including:

NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF GENERATIVE AI: As generative AI rapidly advances, FCCP, like most experiential learning programs, must adapt its curriculum to support student learning in an AI-driven world. The program office is undertaking an initiative to develop a comprehensive framework and guidelines for the appropriate use of generative AI in FCCP projects. This will include strategies for incorporating AI into classroom sessions and guidelines for integrating AI into student deliverable development.

MAINTAINING INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT WHILE SITTING OUTSIDE OF THE DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE: FCCP, and experiential learning more generally, have enjoyed decades of support from Fuqua's leadership. As the FCCP program continues to evolve and expand, staying aligned with that vision is essential as we remain committed to generating value for our students, the School, and the larger Fuqua community (see Goals/Priorities below).

QUALITY CONTROL IN PROJECT SOURCING: Although the FCCP program office receives more client applications than can be matched with student teams, these submissions have a significant degree of variability. Even with program office expertise in sourcing and framing projects, plus the additional layer of diligence that Fellows and Engagement Managers undertake, quality control remains a challenge. Each year some projects suffer from poor client engagement, lack of understanding of the educational goals, misaligned expectations and scope creep, to name the more common client-related challenges.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS: The FCCP program has a standard Confidentiality Agreement that each team member on a project, along with their Faculty Advisor and Fellow, must sign before sending it to their client for signature. This document gets uploaded as a required submission. While some issues have to do with compliance, such as teams submitting forms with missing signatures, the more significant challenge has been client adjustments or requests

to use their own NDA, usually not drafted with the students' educational experience in mind. The complexity of these adjustments, the time investment in multiple rounds of markups, and discussions with legal departments strain a small program team during the busy project execution period. They also risk delaying the start of a project and potentially preventing the project from coming to fruition at all.

RECRUITING FELLOWS AND ENGAGEMENT MANAGERS: Promoting the Fellow/EM role to students, reviewing applications, coordinating interview schedules and scheduling meetings to assess candidates through final selection and orientation is time intensive and requires collaboration with several student leaders. An additional challenge is the fact that the EM role is a lesser-known opportunity and requires a more considerable student time investment, so applications tend to be fewer. Alumni Mentors are equivalent to the Fellow role, but the Executive MBA program relies entirely on working professional volunteers. As such, the difficulty maintaining engagement while juggling busy schedules can present problems, especially towards the tail end of a project.



Student and alumni feedback demonstrate that FCCP adds value by helping students secure job offers as well as preparing them to do well in the jobs they secure.



GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

The goal of FCCP is to enhance students' business education by developing collaborative consulting engagements with businesses and nonprofit organizations in which our students assist their client organizations in addressing existing and emerging challenges. To fulfill this educational goal while also addressing the challenges we face, FCCP must focus on generating value across the spectrum of institutional stakeholders, including students, alumni, organizations that have or may hire our graduates, and the School itself.

Student and alumni feedback demonstrate that these courses add value by 1) helping students secure internships and ultimately full-time job offers; and 2) preparing students to do well in the jobs they secure. FCCP supports students in their job searches by affording direct experience working with the types of organizations and in the industry sectors that students are targeting for employment. At the same time, FCCP offers students the ability to shape the scope of and then carry out project work, which allows them to practice the skills they are learning in the classroom. By enabling students to engage in the same (or similar) kinds of activities that they will be responsible for performing in their internships and full-time jobs, FCCP provides exceptional, real-world experiences that build confidence and prepare students for success on the job.

Beyond playing an important part in fulfilling Fuqua's educational mission, FCCP adds value to Fuqua in several important ways. First, the program assists the School in attracting students. Every year, inquiries about FCCP from students considering Fuqua grow, and our information sessions for prospective students during Blue Devil Weekend are well attended.

Second, FCCP offers a valuable way to enhance alumni ties with Fuqua. Increasingly, Fuqua alumni are bringing project opportunities for FCCP from their respective employers. It is particularly rewarding to see alumni who took these courses during their time at Fuqua now supporting our programs in these ways. Our contribution to supporting alumni relations has already resulted in financial contribution from a professional consulting firm, and we believe these efforts will continue to pay dividends to the School over the long term.

Third, and building on the second point, FCCP serves as another valuable, business-facing arm for the School. Beyond building ties with our alumni base, FCCP has a direct and positive impact on employer perceptions of the Fuqua School of Business. Employer feedback has demonstrated that they are very satisfied with the work our students are doing. Favorable employer reactions increase the perceived value of Fuqua MBAs, supporting both hiring and greater starting salaries for our graduates. This process of creating value for students, alumni, employers and the School itself has generated a virtuous cycle for all stakeholders. Our central priority is continuing to enhance this virtuous cycle of value creation.

Duke University's Fuqua School of Business is a top-ranked graduate business school within an extensive multi-discipline university dedicated to advancing the understanding of management through research and providing the highest quality education. Fuqua enrolls more than 1,900 students a year across our 10 degree programs, which offer a wide range of program formats and flexibility for working professionals and full-time students.