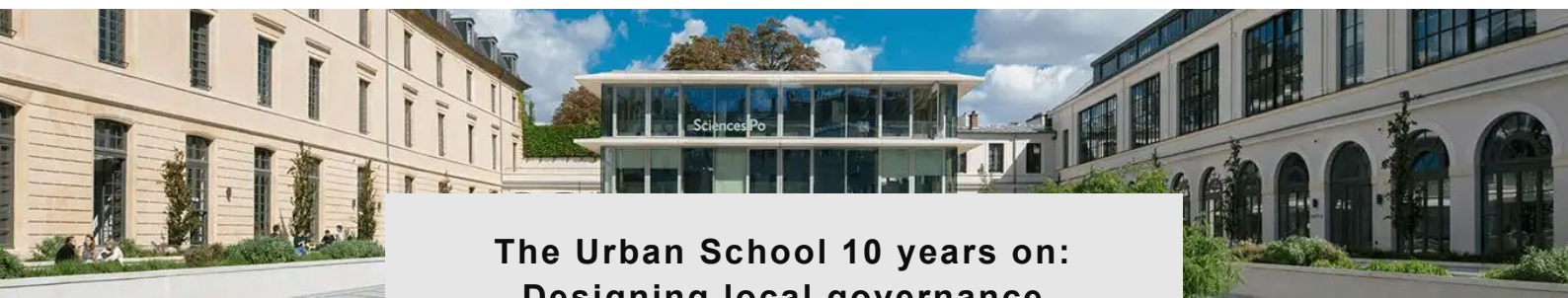


CALL FOR GROUP PROJECTS



The Urban School 10 years on: Designing local governance for the future

Academic year 2025-2026

Since its creation in 2015, the Urban School has for a core pedagogical principle the co-production of public knowledge by students, teachers, and professionals. We firmly believe that students learn more and better when they are involved in research for cities, regions, and their stakeholders. At the same time, the School contributes to professional debates by producing robust knowledge based on social sciences, to better integrate ecological, social, and digital transitions, and to support the practical transformations they induce.

In the field of urban and regional governance, there is a growing need for knowledge, as it faces rising uncertainty, the challenge of climate adaptation, and a reshuffling of its actors and methods. The relationship between knowledge and action is breaking away from linear approaches (from academia to private and public decision-makers) in favour of co-construction and 'action research' approaches, which the group projects of the Urban School definitely are.

Designed to promote exchanges and collaboration between real-world action and education, the group projects are met with strong interest from students, as they are a powerful tool for professionalisation. For our partners, this represents an original way of producing new knowledge, as an alternative to the usual conduct of studies. Finally, for the community of teachers and tutors, it often represents a 'happy moment in teaching,' more horizontal than traditional education formats.

For all these reasons, 10 years after its creation, the Urban School wants to reaffirm the group projects as its core teaching, as an iterative process between knowledge and action, following a collaborative model with our partners. Thanks to this original module, students respond to a real-world governance problem posed by a public, private, or non-profit organisation. For 9 months, a team of 4 or 5 students works under the scientific and methodological supervision of a tutor. Each project concludes with a presentation of the final report to the partner and at the Urban School's Lab Day in June. A written report is also produced, and innovative formats can be proposed: an exhibition, a video, a seminar, a public presentation of the results, a podcast... For our partners, numbering around forty each year, it is a valuable and original way of breaking new ground on a subject, informing decisions, or changing corporate policies

or strategies. The group projects mobilise the knowledge, skills, and, above all, the energy and commitment of our students, under the guidance of the Urban School and its tutors, to help professional worlds evolve in a way that takes greater account of current transitions.

This call for projects remains open: it incorporates a territorial dimension, with no specific thematic focus. After 10 years' experience, this type of exercise is particularly relevant in situations of high uncertainty, requiring the use of hybrid methods, interdisciplinarity and innovation, and on forward-looking issues for which it seems appropriate to mobilise the newer generations of urban governance professionals.

GROUP PROJECTS AT SCIENCES PO URBAN SCHOOL: SHINING A LIGHT ON CHANGE

The objectives of a group project

The Urban School trains professionals capable of managing the transformations taking place in cities and regions, by equipping them with theoretical and operational knowledge that is both critical and comparative. Students are trained in social sciences and take a multi-disciplinary approach to local issues. By analysing and comparing local dynamics in France, Europe and the rest of the world, they develop the ability to **design, implement, support and evaluate public policies and complex projects**.

The group project makes on-the-job experience and collaboration with real partners an excellent lever for professionalisation, encouraging negotiation, respect for constraints and decision-making.

Collective projects lend themselves particularly well to research, diagnosis, forecasting, comparative analysis and even preparation for evaluation, and more generally to enlighten the organisation through R&D-style methods. This is the second objective of our group projects: to produce new knowledge that is useful for action. What makes them special is that they are led by students who bring not only their academic skills but also, and above all, a fresh, outside view of operational issues, as future professionals in the making. It is an educative project, not a service contract.

They are also a great opportunity to create spaces and moments within our partner organisations that break with daily routine. All our projects, through their cross-disciplinary nature and their collective dimension, promote a collaborative culture, new methods and new ways of looking at the objects of study: **this is the creative power of the group projects**.

How a group project works

In **graduate programmes**, each project involves a group of 4 or 5 first-year students from one of the Urban School's master's courses. The students work between 1.5 and 2 days a week (Thursdays and Fridays, with no other concurrent teaching) for a period of 9 months, from October to June.

In **Executive Education**, group projects involve students from the Executive Master of Regional Governance and Urban Development, for 50 hours per person in dedicated time slots, with no other concurrent teaching, for a period of 4 months, from January to June (the methodology is adapted to a tighter timetable).

The group is supervised by an **experienced professional tutor**, recruited for the occasion by the School, with the agreement of the partner, once any potential conflicts of interest have been checked and ruled out. The project is supervised by a member of the School's team, who is ultimately responsible for its implementation. The stakeholders form a **Steering Committee**.

The objectives and terms of the project are defined based on the presentation sheet sent to support the application (see below). The form can be reworked with the Urban School or the Executive Education team before the project is launched.

The Urban School must be involved at four specific times: at the launch of the project, at the time when the subject is presented, at the mid-term Steering Committee meeting and at the closing Steering Committee meeting. It can, of course, be called upon as and when required by the partner, group, or tutor.

The following productions are systematic during group projects:

- no later than one month after the launch of the project, **a problem and methodology note** including a presentation of the issues, the project's objectives, details of the research to be carried out, and a timeline,
- as part of the mid-term Steering Committee, **an interim report** presenting a literature review and/or a state of the art/benchmark and the results of initial field research,
- as part of the final Steering Committee meeting, **a final report**, presenting the group's conclusions and including a critical review of what has been achieved and what can be improved, plus a summary for publication,
- Steering Committee presentation documents and associated minutes,
- a summary of the project as part of the Urban School Lab Day (see p. 4).

Successful participation in the project is required for our students to graduate. The Urban School has full authority to validate the project, considering feedback from the partner, the students and the tutor.

Students transfer to Sciences Po the intellectual property of their work free of charge for use by the Urban School and its partners. Only free of charge distribution of the work is authorised.

Any public mention of the project must include a reference to the students who carried it out. Where explicitly required by the partner, students and tutors can be bound by a confidentiality clause.

THE URBAN SCHOOL LAB DAY, A KEY OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE OUR GROUP PROJECTS

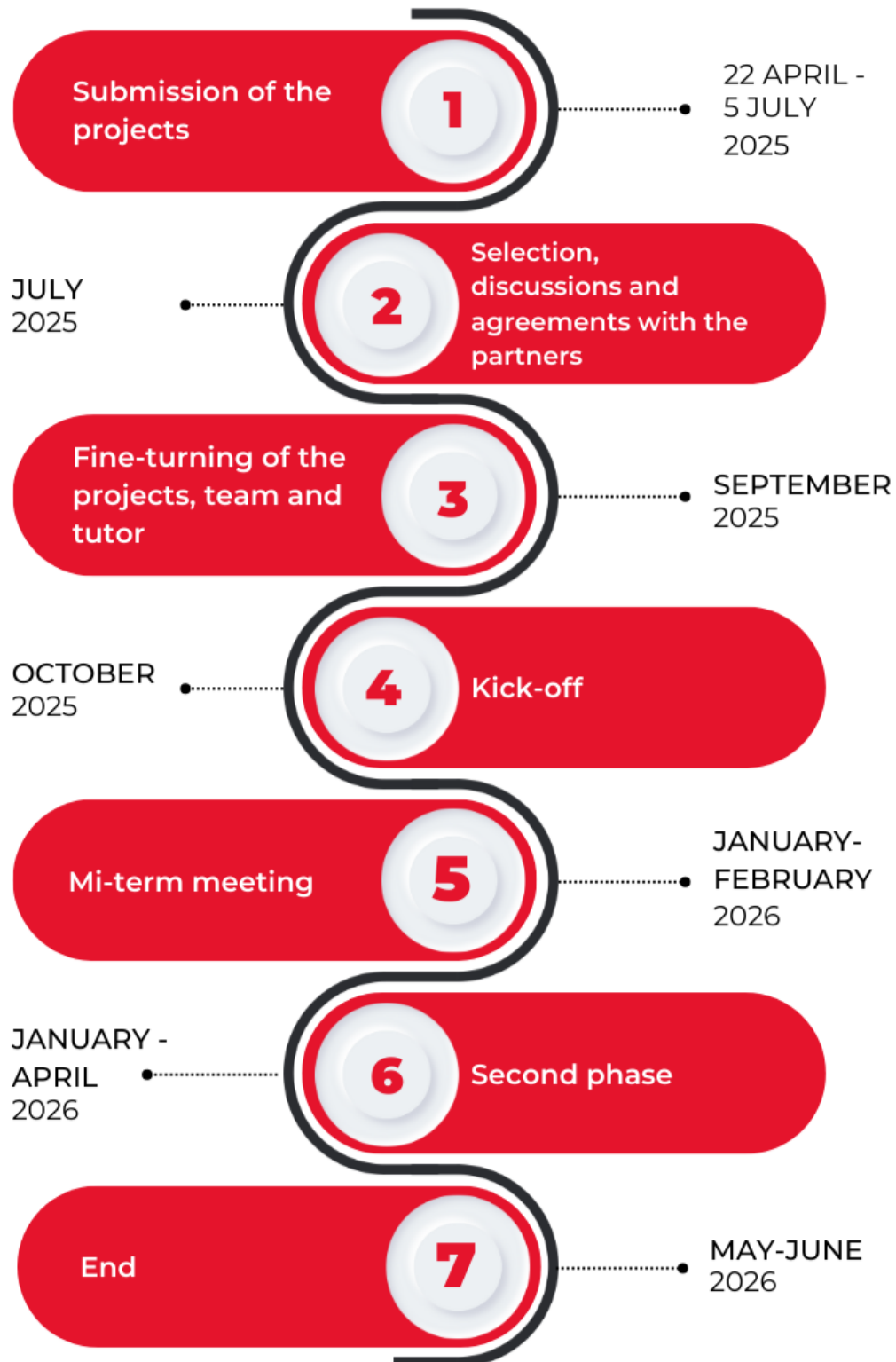
The strategy for promoting the group projects is planned and decided by the stakeholders at the latest at the mid-term Steering Committee meeting. In addition to the compulsory written reports mentioned above, and with the agreement of the Urban School and the partners, it can take a wide variety of forms depending on the subject: articles and publications, podcasts and other media formats, participation in conferences, webinars, creation of or participation in exhibitions, private or public presentations, etc. The work produced by the group project provides the content for these different formats, but publishing, communication and the organisation of events remain the full responsibility of the partner, apart from events and publications directly supported by the Urban School Lab.

Except for certain subjects whose confidentiality prevents them from being circulated (subject to prior discussion with the partner), the final reports of collective projects will be collected and made available in Sciences Po's new digital library.

Finally, in June each year, the Urban School Lab organises a public event to present and promote the results of the forty or so group projects of the academic year. The workshops provide cross-presentations of the projects' main results, in the presence of the tutors and the partners. This brings together more than 500 participants on the Sciences Po campus, bringing together the different communities that make up the heart of the Urban School.



TIMETABLE FOR GROUP PROJECTS AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES



Applications must be sent to the Urban School by e-mail **between 28 April 2025 and Friday 4 July 2025 at the latest.**

Applications for graduate master's programmes projects should be sent by e-mail to the following three addresses:

- ilaria.milazzo@sciencespo.fr (executive director)
- bertrand.vallet@sciencespo.fr (Lab manager)
- sandrine.boisard@sciencespo.fr (head of legal and financial affairs)

For Executive Education projects, applications should be sent by e-mail to the following two addresses:

- charlotte.halpern@sciencespo.fr (scientific director)
- alexia.krief@sciencespo.fr (programme manager)

Applications take the form of a project initiation document (document p. 8).

The selection committee meets in July to ensure that the projects cover a wide range of themes and sectors.

The committee is sovereign. It will base its decision on the following criteria:

- the strategic and operational dimensions of the issues raised by the partner, in close connection with the students' curriculum,
- a good understanding of the teaching method and what it entails, i.e. an R&D and critical analysis approach entrusted to students,
- the organisation's ability to monitor the project, especially by appointing a contact person to meet the students and provide them with the data and information they need for their work,
- the clarity of the partner's expectations for the project's final productions.

The committee will pay particular attention to possible conflicts of interest. Under no circumstances may a group project be used as service contracting, consulting, or to serve partisan interests. The aim of the group project is to produce accessible public knowledge.

ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

The call for group projects is open to all public, private, and non-profit legal entities, based in France or abroad, with the exceptions of partisan, trade union, or religious organisations, in the interests of neutrality. The collective project is an educational tool and not a service. As a result, it is not subject to any obligation to achieve results and the intellectual property is held by the students, who assign it free of charge to Sciences Po and the partner so that the results can be published.

The selected partners are being asked to provide financial support for the teaching activities of the Urban School (support which may, for eligible organisations, take the form of sponsorship), up to a maximum of €16,000 for the *Regional and Urban Strategies*, *Governing the Large Metropolis* and *Governing Ecological Transitions in Cities* master's, and €21,000 for the *Master in Urban Planning*.

For the *Executive Master of Regional Governance and Urban Development*, please contact the programme team directly.

Sciences Po will cover all the costs involved in carrying out the group project, including supervision costs and students' travel and mission expenses. The financial support from the partners is also intended to develop certain training activities, such as study trips for Urban School students and initiatives to develop skills specific to group projects (graphic design, cartography, urban data modelling, project management, drafting strategic recommendations, etc.).

**GROUP PROJECT BETWEEN THE URBAN SCHOOL AND
XXXXXXX
ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-2026
PROJECT TITLE: "XXXXXXXXXXXX"**

Date:

Name of partner (organisation):

Name of contact person:

Project title:

What are the strategic and operational issues behind the request for a group project by the applicant organisation?

What questions are asked of the students and what results are expected from the group project for the organisation?

What methodology and phasing are envisaged at this stage?

What types of productions are required? How will they be published?

What format is proposed to monitor the project within the applicant organisation?

In short, why would the organisation give this project to Urban School students?

Find out more about the Urban School:

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[Summaries of past projects](#)



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