

How we work with undergrads on research projects

Prof. Felix Lin, Spring 2020

“Can I do research with you?” I am often approached by undergrads.

We have a good track record of engaging with undergrads in research. Here is an overview of our approach.

Goal

Put students in a competitive position in grad school applications and/or job hunting

Premises

Undergrads have diverse career objectives

Principles

- Do publishable research
- Do cool research
- No time & energy commitment expected from the students up front
- Start from small. Scale up gracefully
- Okay to quit even in the early stage

Typical procedure

1. We will assign a few lightweight “bootcamp” tasks for the interested students to complete. There is no deadline. Just do your best. Email back when you have finished the task(s).
2. We examine the bootcamp outcome and the student’s feedback. Then we will define a small, yet standalone project. Likely, the project is a small piece carved out from an existing project. Examples include analyzing software codebase and fixing bugs, running benchmarks on specific hardware, etc.
3. If the student is doing well in step 2 and willing to continue, we will upgrade the project to a larger one.
4. Repeat step 3 until the student is integrated in a full-fledged project.