McMaster University | **SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

Gilmour Hall, Room 212
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L8

(905) 525-9140 x 23679
gs.mcmaster.ca

To : Members of Graduate Council

From : Christina Bryce
Assistant Graduate Secretary

The next meeting of Graduate Council will be held on **Tuesday June 3rd at 9:00 am via Zoom:**

https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/97805042049

Meeting ID: 978 0504 2049
Passcode: 791547

Listed below are the agenda items for discussion.

Please email *cbryce@mcmaster.ca* if you are unable to attend the meeting.

A G E N D A

I. Opening Remarks

II. Minutes of the meeting of May 13th, 2025

Approval

III. Business arising

IV. Report from the Associate Deans, Graduate Studies

V. Report from the Senior Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

VI. New Program Proposal

Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies and Leadership
Approval

VII. Faculty of Health Sciences Graduate Policy and Curriculum Committee Report

Information

VIII. Faculty of Science Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report

Information

IX. New Scholarships

Approval

BRIGHTER WORLD

McMaster University | **SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

Gilmour Hall, Room 212
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L8

(905) 525-9140 x 23679
gs.mcmaster.ca

Tuesday May 13th at 9:00 am in GH-111

Present: S. Hranilovic, S. Hranilovic (Chair), S. Hanna, N. Carter, F. Homid, F. Ma, A. Shakib, A. Prasad, S. Hanna, K. McCallum, I. Jahan, T. Ruebottom, B. Newbold, D. Trigatti, M. Verma, M. Heath, N. Wagner, P. Miu, T. Davidson, K. Graham, O. Liao, E. Grodek, M. Gough, B. Milliken, C. Chakraborty, E. Zhou, K. Bhatta, L. Side, J. Antwi-Boasiako, Y. Kim, C. Bryce (Assistance Graduate Secretary), S. Baschiera (Senior Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary)

Regrets: K. Grandfield, C. Biruk, M. Cino, D. Emslie, A. Gadsden, K. Mattison, L. Parker, Y. K. Shin

I.   Opening Remarks

Dr. Hranilovic reported on the following items:

- The status of Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL) allocation, noting the benchmarks and timelines McMaster needs to meet to retain the rest of its allocation;
- The development of framework to allow stacking credentials and more flexible access to graduate credentials;
- An overview of the IQAP review process, noting the work involved in the process and the importance of continuous improvement.

Members discussed the IQAP review process, highlighting the intersection with accreditation reviews and the potential for some improvement as it relates to programs who must conduct accreditation reviews in addition to their IQAPs.

II.   Minutes of the meeting of April 15th, 2025

It was duly moved and seconded, '**that the Graduate Council approve the minutes of the April 15th, 2025 meeting, as circulated with one correction to a typo.**'

The motion was **carried**.

III.   Business arising

There was no business arising.

IV.   Report from the Associate Deans, Graduate Studies

Dr. Hanna (Faculty of Health Sciences) reported on the following items:
- The Plenary event;
- Upcoming Faculty of Health Sciences convocation ceremonies.

Dr. Heath (Faculty of Social Sciences) reported on the following item:
- The Faculty's first alumni workshop on careers beyond academia.

![McMaster University logo] **SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

Gilmour Hall, Room 212
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L8

📞 (905) 525-9140 x 23679
🌐 gs.mcmaster.ca

Dr. Newbold (Faculty of Science) reported on the following item:
- An upcoming GEMS presentation in GH 212;
- The Science Graduate Student Association is seeking nominations for members.

Dr. Verma (Faculty of Business) reported on the following item:
- The DeGroote Doctoral Student Association had recently held an event engaging alumni from industry to talk about opportunities outside of academia.

V. Report from the Senior Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera reported on the following items:

- PAL allocation numbers;
- A focus on converting applicants to students;
- Preparation for the end of the academic year and beginning of the next academic year.

VI. Report from Certificate, Diplomas and Microcredentials Committee

- Graduate Academic Certificate in Data Science, Applied AI, & Organizational Leadership

Dr. Verma presented the certificate, noting a planned launch of fall 2025. It will be delivered in a blended format and consists of 3 courses (6 units of instruction) and can be completed in three weeks.

Dr. Hranilovic highlighted that the unit count is the same as previously approved certificates approved but organized differently.

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that the Graduate Council approve, for recommendation to the University Planning Committee and the Senate, the establishment of the graduate academic certificate in Data Science, Applied AI, & Organizational Leadership, for inclusion in the 2025-2026 Graduate Calendar, as circulated.'**

The motion was **carried.**

VII. Faculty of Health Sciences Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report

Dr. Hanna explained the change noting that Health Policy wants to add a part-time option. He highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of the program and the range of courses, with the specific number required being determined by the student's background. The program would now like to bring students who are already working in policy contexts to do the program part-time. The requirements remain the same but a key feature of the part-time option is that they have made provision for one term of overload if needed.

McMaster University | SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Gilmour Hall, Room 212
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L8

(905) 525-9140 x 23679
gs.mcmaster.ca

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that the Graduate Council approve, for recommendation to Senate as appropriate, the changes proposed by the Faculty of Health Sciences, as described in the documents.'**

The motion was **carried**.

VIII.   **Faculty of Social Sciences Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report**

Dr. Heath presented the change for information, noting a prerequisite was being removed from a course.

IX.   **Spring 2025 Graduands (to be circulated)**

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the list of the 2025 Spring Graduands, with amendments/corrections to be made as necessary by the Senior Associate Graduate Registrar.'**

The motion was **approved**.

X.   **Final Assessment Reports**

Dr. Hranilovic presented the item for information and noted that these documents were publicly available at the end of a review and that they would be useful for anyone preparing for their next review.

NEW PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Executive-level Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies and Leadership

December 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMPLETING THE NEW PROGRAM PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

This New Program Proposal template is structured to correspond with the evaluation criteria outlined in McMaster's Policies, Procedures and Guidelines: https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/AdminAcad/AcadAdmin/AcademicProgramReview.pdf. For additional information, contacts or guidebooks, departments can visit the IQAP website https://mi.mcmaster.ca/iqap/ or email iqap@mcmaster.ca.

Please ensure that your department refers to the New Program Proposal Guidebook for clarification and further information on the types of evidence required and, where applicable, what resources are available to assist in retrieval or interpretation of the information required for this proposal.

CHECKLIST FOR NEW PROGRAM PROPOSALS

The following section indicates all the items that are required as part of a ***complete*** new program proposal package which includes all the necessary documents. Part I, II and III should be submitted as separate files to iqap@mcmaster.ca.

PART I: COMPLETE NEW PROGRAM PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

- ☐ **Complete New Program Proposal Template**
- ☐ **Faculty CVs** (can be submitted on CD or USB)
- ☐ **Memorandum(s) of Understanding (Letters of Support)** (if applicable)

PART II: RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

- ☐ Completed
- ☐ Approved

PART III: FEES MEMO

- ☐ Completed
- ☐ Approved

Chair's Declaration of New Program Proposal Completeness:

I, Greg Flynn, have reviewed the New Program Proposal for the Executive Master of Public Policy and agree that it is complete and satisfies all of the requirements McMaster University's Policy on Academic Program Development and Review.

Signature: *Greg Flynn*

Dean's Declaration of New Program Proposal Completeness:

I, Jeremiah Hurley, have reviewed the New Program Proposal for the Master of Public Policy – Digital Solutions, Strategies and Leadership and agree that it is complete and satisfies all of the requirements McMaster University's Policy on Academic Program Development and Review.

Signature:

1. PROGRAM

1.1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

What will we offer?

The proposed executive-level Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies and Leadership (MPP-DSSL) at McMaster University will be the first and only such degree of its kind in Canada. It will be a part time, professional master's degree targeted to mid-career public policy workers who have achieved, or seek to achieve, leadership in policy roles in the public or private sector. Building upon the successful Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree, launched in 2021 with a focus on Digital Society and expanding in 2025 to include a second stream on Housing, the MPP-DSSL will be a different type of program entirely. The new program will foster a much-needed management level expertise in digital policy and technology and promote leadership skills for experienced policy professionals from public or private sector settings, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to strategically guide policy development and evaluation in our ubiquitously technologically mediated society.

Course delivery in this part-time, blended learning executive-level program is designed to allow students to complete the program as quickly as desired while still providing flexibility for work and life schedules. Students will be able to select from two different options: will take place :

- Fast-track - over 12 consecutive months (3 semesters).
- Gradual-track - 24 months (6 semesters).

A mix of asynchronous and self-paced learning coupled with online synchronous content will facilitate participation by students who are maintaining full-time employment, while both learning and networking will be facilitated during a six-day in-person residency week that will occur once per semester (three in total). The completely new curriculum created for the executive program will combine seminar-based learning (two courses per semester for a total of six 3-unit seminar courses) and skills-based policy lab intensives (one per semester for a total of three 1.5-unit labs) to develop an advanced set of core management level competencies at the intersection of digital technology and public policy, focusing on advanced public policy understandings and approaches, digital fluency, enhanced skill development, strategic thinking, and leadership. The course schedule for each option is as follows:

Fast Track Option

- Two seminar courses per semester;
- One intensive/residency course per semester;
  - Foundations in Public Policy, taken in first week of semester 1;
  - Leadership, taken in middle week of semester 2;
  - Capstone, taken in final week of semester 3; and
- One skills policy lab per semester.

Gradual Track Option

The gradual track option is designed around students taking a total of two courses per semester, with some flexibility as to when the Leadership Intensive/Residency course is taken and with a corresponding effect on when the skills policy Lab will be taken in year 1 or 2.

- One seminar course per semester;
- One intensive/residency course per semester;
    - Foundations in Public Policy, taken in year 1;
    - Leadership, taken in year 1 or year 2;
    - Capstone, taken in year 2.
- One skills policy lab per semester, taken in either year 1 or year 2.

For a more detailed account of the anticipated scheduling of courses in both options, please see section 4.1 and following the listing of courses.

The executive level MPP-DSSL marks an evolution of the scope and ambition of the overall MPP program into its next logical sequence in three ways.

First, it will move from the current and sole focus of the MPP on entry-level and predominantly straight-out-of-undergraduate students in the Digital Society and Housing streams to mid-career learners, bringing a new learner group into graduate education at McMaster University.

Second, the nature of the mid-career and professional cohort will mark a shift in pedagogical approaches, where students will be able to and will be asked to more fully and explicitly draw on their individual occupational experiences as part of the course curriculum and learning. Having faced particular and practical challenges in their careers, these experiences will more fully flesh out and demonstrate the relevance of the core curriculum beyond the more academic focus that can predominate classroom environments. As policy leaders, students will not only learn from faculty members and their assigned work, but also, and most importantly, from one another in how to lead and deal strategically with the problems caused by and faced in our digital world.

Third, the MPP-DSSL will mark an important interdisciplinary evolution in the suite of MPP offerings, moving away from the mostly Social Sciences interdisciplinary base to incorporate key contributions from the Faculties of Engineering and Business. As the name of the new program suggests, its focus will be on a wider and more interdisciplinary approach to public policy and the public and private sector challenges faced in an ever-increasing array of digital business and governance environments. This is reflected in the key curriculum pillars of the program:

1. Digital Technology and Policy ***Solutions***
2. Governance and Management ***Strategies***
3. Process and Results Based ***Leadership***

These three pillars reflect the intersection of knowledge and skill development necessary for managing and governing in the increasingly digital world and draw upon the combined strengths of McMaster's expertise in Public Policy, Engineering and Business.

How is it unique?

While there are thematic similarities between the proposed executive-level MPP-DSSL and the existing Digital Society stream due to a broadly "digital" focus, the proposed program will be distinct in terms of audience, objectives, format, and curricular content.

Audience: The MPP-DSSL is designed for and will attract a different category of students: working professionals with five to seven years of experience (or more) and at, or approaching, the management level stage of their careers. It will provide them with a graduate degree that will heighten their effectiveness as managers and policy leaders and increase their leadership potential for future career progression. Rather than the entry level position focus of the MPP in Digital Society or Housing streams, the MPP-DSSL will attract a new cohort of technology- and policy-focused learners seeking to expand their professional knowledge and skills to advance their policy-focused careers in our digital age.

The MPP-DSSL program will be explicitly tailored to their career stage as managers, both in content and format: delivering the technology, public policy and leadership knowledge they need to know and skills they need to have to lead and guide their organizations, in the flexible format they need it to fit into their busy professional lives and while still permitting them to maintain their full-time employment. The cohort approach in either of the fast-track or gradual-track options coupled with the three one-week intensive programming sessions will provide unparalleled networking opportunities in a unique and distinct learning space focused on public policy, providing students with both knowledge and resources that they can draw on after the completion of the degree and as they face the ever-evolving digital and public policy challenges in both public and private sector careers. It will build upon and enhance their existing strategic and leadership capacities through knowledge, application and interpersonal connection with others facing similar challenges.

Objectives: The learning goals for the executive level MPP-DSSL are threefold:

1. Enable experienced public and private sector policymakers to build on their existing and continuing professional knowledge and experience to achieve a broader and deeper understanding of digital technologies: first, as a subject of policy, second, as an enabler of public policy, and third, as a provider of policy options and solutions.

2. Build understandings of how both digital tools and digital approaches can be used strategically to facilitate policy design, implementation and evaluation. Enhanced technological knowledge is an essential foundation for good technology policy and a necessary key element to navigating complicated policy choices in the increasingly digital world of public policy.

3. Provide a body of specialized information and leadership skills needed for both digital and more general policy leadership in Canada to individuals who have the potential to make an immediate impact, either through their supervisory or management level positions or as key policy leaders and developers in their workplaces.

Format: Our stakeholder engagement revealed that interpersonal interaction, networking opportunities, and flexibility for self-paced learning are integral to an executive program experience. Our part-time blended learning approach meets these needs, with three one-week residencies for in-person relationship building and intensive focused instruction ~~bracket~~**support**ed by periods of synchronous and

asynchronous online learning. Sites of the in-person residencies will be chosen from among McMaster's Toronto Hub, our Burlington or Hamilton campus, and other locations chosen for the convenience for our student cohort that allow for a focused educational experience in a setting conducive to immersive learning. The residency approach is modeled on successful executive programs at McMaster in Communications and in Business.

Courses: Every course in the proposed MPP-DSSL is new and will be exclusive to the program. Unlike the existing MPP, which spends the first full semester establishing a foundational level-setting in policy and technical basics, the MPP-DSSL has an accelerated timeline that focuses on guiding experienced practitioners already in existing policy or governance roles— who finished their formal academic training some time ago— through current advanced research and thinking in policy design and regulation, the tech economy and emerging and evolving technologies, and leadership and managements skills and challenges in the digital policy world.

The explicit and dominant public policy focused aspect of the curriculum differentiates the MPP-DSSL from other graduate and executive level programs that exist or are contemplated at McMaster. This explicit public policy focus in digital technology and digital policy environments is at the core of our program and consists of three prongs:

> (a) understanding digital innovation in and through policy,

> (b) using digital technologies to accomplish policy goals/do policy work, and

> (c) regulating technologies and digitally mediated activities in a data-driven world.

The broad and deep digital policy content is supported by courses in understanding data and research and how that information can be used to support strategic policy making and developing those aspects of leadership necessary for managing digital transformation and organisational change, which round out the other key pillars of the program.

This approach to curriculum (digital technology and public policy solutions, strategic thinking and planning, and leadership) is directly informed by our stakeholder research (see section 1.2). Overall, these new courses and focus on technology and policy solutions, the strategic focus and attentions of policy-related actions and leadership promote a different set of learning goals aimed at and created for a more professionally and occupationally advanced student and management level-oriented audience and will provide a broad, deep, and strategic understanding of the policy challenges created by our digital world.

The program will foster much-needed management level expertise in public policy, digital policy and technology solutions and promote strategic thinking and leadership skills to guide policy development, implementation, and evaluation in our technologically mediated society. The curriculum will build on our current partnerships with faculty in Social Science departments including Economics and Political Science, as well as new collaborations with the Faculty of Engineering and the DeGroote School of Business. This approach will enhance students' fundamental understandings of technology development and function, and the role public policy plays across sectors and across disciplinary boundaries, in a world where technological change outpaces changes in social norms and legal frameworks. It is unique

in its audience, learning goals and objectives, its advanced, theoretically grounded yet professionally oriented course content, and its blended learning delivery model.

This program is tailored for a mature student cohort with significant relevant work experience and is intended to provide the skills and knowledge to lead and manage in a digital policy environment. Course delivery in this part-time, blended learning executive program will take place in one of two options: over 12 consecutive months (three3 semesters) or 24 (six semesters) months. A mix of asynchronous and self-paced learning coupled with online synchronous content will facilitate participation by students who are maintaining full-time employment. Learning and networking will be facilitated during a sixfour or five-day in-person residency weekcourses that will occur once per semester (three in total). The curriculum created for the executive program will combine seminar-based learning (two courses per semester for a total of sixnine 3-unit seminar courses) and skills-based policy lab intensives (one per semester for a total of three 1.5-unit labs) to develop an advanced set of core management level competencies at the intersection of digital technology and public policy. Students will bring their direct experiences of the complex challenges of contemporary governance to bear across a set of courses informed by a stakeholder engagement that identified current gaps in digital fluencies and skills required for advancement in a policy setting. Instructional focus will be directed towards developing both in-depth theoretical understanding and the practical skills necessary to ensure that students acquire, and are able to demonstrate, advanced mastery of public policy fundamentals, data literacies, change management, and the base mechanics and policy intricacies of a range of existing and emerging digital technologies. The curriculum mixes traditional and experiential learning and adopts an agile structure to remain relevant at the pace of technological change.

Given the range of different work and educational experiences, students will be provided with a foundational course in public policy at the outset of the program. As well,Tthe substantial work experience that will be a pre-requisite for admission will also provide a common foundation of policy experience, while the program and will allow students to leverage their own subject expertise from formal and on-the-job learning they have acquired. This mix--a diversity of expertise from a range of policy topic areas, grounded in a shared depth of professional experiences on entry--will be a source of strength for the program, allowing for multi-faceted discussions, cross-disciplinary relationship building and rich peer learning opportunities. Learning objectives and course content for this program cover topics designed to contribute to practical execution of tasks in the policy workplace at the supervisory and management levels with a superior subject expertise in public policy and digital technology.

Why Now?

As Alex Benay, former Chief Information Officer of Canada, told the Public Policy Forum in 2019, "Nothing short of a complete rethink of the operating model of government is required to transition to the digital, interconnected era in which we live." This revolution needs to happen not just at the entry level of government, but throughout the whole of its operations. The proposed executive-level MPP-DSSL is a program that meets and is specifically tailored to this need by educating mid-and senior-level policy professionals who are positioned to immediately action within their public or private sector organisations the ideas and concepts they learn. It will do so with an eye to the flexibility that students at this level of their professions will need to accomplish these goals.

One need only peruse the list of legislation currently tabled in Parliament to understand the demand for upskilling experienced public policy experts in the risks and benefits of emerging and evolving digital technologies to Canadian governments and to Canadians. From public sector privacy and artificial intelligence (Bill C-27, the *Digital Charter Implementation Act 2022*) to cyber security (Bill C-26, *An Act Respecting Cyber Security*) to online harms (Bill C-63, *An Act to enact the Online Harms Act, to amend the Criminal Code, The Canadian Human Rights Act and An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet Service*), the pressing policy issues of today have a digital nexus. At the same time, the private sector has significant economic and innovation interests that require policy intervention and a corresponding need in those ~~organisations~~organizations for similarly trained policy professionals.

One prominent example of the transformative potential of digital innovation and the correspondingly exponential need for appropriate governance is, of course, artificial intelligence. In the two-plus years since the initial public launch ChatGPT in 2022 it has become evident that artificial intelligence technologies (AI) offer tremendous opportunities across many sectors to drive productivity and bring revolutionary impacts. At the same time, there are risks inherent to AI technology: to economic rights, to human rights, and to the environment. These all need to be actively managed through law and policy to ensure society reaps the benefits of AI while mitigating its harms. And while AI is perhaps the most obvious example, there are a wide range of digital innovations and practices across sectors as diverse as finance, health, public safety, transportation, and education itself that all raise unique tensions that require skilled policymaking to navigate for the good of society.

This requires conceiving, developing, implementing, and evaluating policies that address the opportunities and threats the digital world creates for our democracy, our economy, and our citizenry in a manner that reflects Canadian values, upholds Canadian principles, and delivers for people across Canada. McMaster's proposed executive-level MPP-DSSL is the vehicle to provide current policy professionals, who are in or aspire to take on leadership roles in both government and the private sector, with the subject expertise and practical capabilities to accomplish that task.

Why Here at McMaster University?

The proposed MPP-DSSL builds on the institutional and faculty strengths of McMaster University in the areas of public policy, digital economy, policy and ethics in the globalised world, and business and digital innovation, engaging students in a range of interdisciplinary topics interrelated with the adoption of digital technologies and practices.

As such, the MPP-DSSL finds its perfect home in McMaster's Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS), which already offers an MPP targeting recent graduates, and whose strategic plan emphasizes interdisciplinarity as a driver of "novel insights to address multi-faceted societal challenges" and prioritizes offering new programs that collaborate across disciplinary boundaries. Policy leaders must be polymaths, capable of considering the social, economic, political, legal, and ethical impacts of their decisions. The MPP-DSSL is focused on providing students with an educational experience that embodies the mission of the Faculty, supporting learners who already play primary and key roles in creating the policies that guide our cities, provinces, and country to "Ask challenging questions, pursue understanding, and work with others to create a more sustainable, just society."

The MPP-DSSL also builds on the success of the currently offered MPP, which has two streams, one focused on Digital Society and one launching in 2025 on Housing policy. The new executive level degree will bring a similarly innovative and learner-centred approach to the range of new classes and innovative synchronous and asynchronous learning formats developed specifically for an audience of mature policy professionals from the public or private sector (see appendix A for a chart that highlights the fundamental differences between the two programs). The existing full-time, entry-level focused-MPP, currently accepting applications for its fifth cohort, has in a few short years carved a unique space in the Canadian market for its Digital Society stream. It has created a brand awareness for McMaster in the policy realm that our stakeholder research confirms will be symbiotic with our proposed new degree.

1.2. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

We began testing the market and identifying learning gaps for mid-career public policy professionals by conducting a series of qualitative, semi-structured stakeholder interviews to determine the potential for an executive level Master of Public Policy degree. We conducted interviews with 26 people including current MPP instructors, private sector policy staff, and policy staff in the Ontario and federal public sector in a range of Ministries or agencies/entities including the Canada School of Public Service. We also conducted research to survey comparable programs across Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. This research allowed us to identify a niche for a Canadian executive program focusing on digital governance and policy, an area in which McMaster has existing public policy reputation and expertise.

After a period of internal development based on this data, including a focus on program objectives and curriculum considerations, we went back out to a subset of stakeholders to test different models, resulting ultimately in the format proposed in this document.

We continue to engage actively with the Faculty of Engineering and the DeGroote School of Business and anticipate that each faculty will teach the equivalent of a full course in the program at a minimum. We have expressions of interest from Kathryn Grandfield, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Engineering and Dave Mammoliti, Director of Executive Programs in the DeGroote School of Business to explore collaborations on this program, as discussed in section 6.1.3 below.

1.3. CONSISTENCY WITH MCMASTER'S MISSION AND ACADEMIC PLAN

The proposed Executive MPP is consistent with the mission and academic plan of McMaster University and will instantiate its current priorities of teaching innovation through creating holistic and personalised student experiences and creating partnered and interdisciplinary learning experiences. The University's Digital Learning Strategic Framework provides a structure for bringing these goals to life, and the new MPP-DSSL aligns with the core goal expressed within that document: to allow educators, learners, and community partners to engage, from diverse locations, with the exceptional educational opportunities our University can provide. The blended learning structure of the MPP–DSSL, which is built around both online and in-person interactions, will leverage technology in our classes to meet the goals

of the strategic framework: to "enhance teaching and learning, foster inclusive excellence, and cultivate innovative learning spaces."

Student Experience: The MPP-DSSL will attract mature, self-directed students who are already in or about to enter management and supervisory roles where interdisciplinarity is a job requirement, and whose educational needs will mesh with, and benefit from, McMaster's strategic teaching priorities. In keeping with McMaster University's commitment to innovative problem-based learning and experiential education, the MPP-DSSL will offer a tailored series of novel and custom-designed courses that provide a unique mix of subject expertise in public policy, digital technology and advanced understanding of the theory and practice of policy in contemporary society. Increasingly, "digital" describes not just technologies but also practices that are increasingly embedded and relevant across the full spectrum of policy arenas under municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal jurisdiction, and across a wide range of private-sector industry actors. The MPP-DSSL leverages experience-based approaches that move through skills development, application and refection, as per the current McMaster Teaching and Learning Strategy, building on the expertise our students, all working professionals, to provide an educational experience that meets dual goals of practicality and intellectual rigour. Executive education, with small classes and mature, motivated students investing in their future is an ideal setting to create a holistic and personalized student experience, again, in keeping with McMaster's intentions to create a genuinely student-centred learning environment.

The executive-level MPP-DSSL will also be responsive to the priorities of McMaster's Strategic Mandate Agreement as follows:

Skills & Job Outcome: We anticipate uptake from management and supervisory level candidates working in both the public and private/industry sectors. Our initial qualitative market "listening tour" with relevant individuals in the public and private sector to develop an understanding of workplace needs and gaps across the federal, provincial and municipal public service, and corporate policy and governance activity centres, suggests that there is a digital fluency gap particularly evident in public servants at mid-level and higher levels of the hierarchy, a gap the MPP-DSSL will address. Areas of growth and metrics to indicate success will include graduate promotion rates, salary increases, and the development of new skills and competencies supporting both position and salary upgrades.

Economic and Community Impact: This professional master's degree program will be designed to equip policy professionals with the capacity necessary to mobilise knowledge, expertise, and research to craft effective policies in public and private sector settings.

1.4. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1.4.1 PROGRAM MISSION/OBJECTIVE

The executive-level MPP-DSSL will equip experienced policy practitioners to act strategically and take leadership roles in policy creation, implementation, promotion, and evaluation in public and private sector organisations. This will provide them with the competencies necessary to navigate the rapidly changing dynamics of the technological landscape and to move forward policies that address the complex social, political, and economic challenges that have accompanied the digital age.

1.4.2 Program Goals

1. THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will be able to demonstrate a systematic interdisciplinary understanding of key theories and models of public policy design, implementation, and evaluation in the context of digital transformation.

2. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Students will be able to ~~analyse~~analyze and evaluate public policy issues using methodologies and conceptual tools (with an appropriate level of critical understanding) and to use these tools to develop prospective solutions for complex policy problems and related ethical issues.

3. TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will develop an understanding of the function, affordances, risks, and benefits of new and evolving technologies and articulate legislative and policy-relevant considerations for public or private sector contexts.

4. DATA, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SKILLS

Students will be able to assess and/or apply appropriate social science research methods and an understanding of data analytics to digital policy problems and to effectively identify and evaluate relevant social scientific research in the context of their professional practice.

5. CRITICAL THINKING AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Students will develop an understanding of strategic thinking and planning and leadership in digital change management, with a demonstrated capacity to exercise initiative and make decisions in complex situations.

6. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Students will be able to engage in effective written and oral communication skills with a broad range of policy stakeholders.

1.5. CONSISTENCY WITH DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

UNDERGRADUATE DLEs	GRADUATE DLEs
Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Knowledge of Methodologies Application of Knowledge Communication Skills Awareness of Limits of Knowledge Autonomy and Professional Capacity	Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Research and Scholarship Application of Knowledge Communication Skills Awareness of Limits of Knowledge Autonomy and Professional Capacity

The table below indicates how the Program Learning Outcomes align with Graduate Degree Level Expectations.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME	DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATION					
	Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	Research and Scholarship	Application of Knowledge	Communication Skills	Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	Autonomy and Professional Capacity
1	X	X		X	X	X
2	X		X		X	X
3	X		X	X	X	
4	X	X	X		X	
5	X	X	X		X	X
6			X	X		X

1.6. DEMAND FOR PROGRAM

1.6.1. Evidence of Societal/Labour Market Need:

The executive-level MPP-DSSL will fill a clear gap in the policy marketplace for a part-time professional executive and management level program across the public and private sector. There is no other graduate program in Canada specifically tailored to educate policy professionals with advanced skills in digital policy, governance, and leadership that allows the necessary skills to be gained and while maintaining full-time employment. These skills align with those expressed in Ontario's "digital first" orientation expressed in the Ontario Public Service People Plan (2023-2026) as well as matching a core federal key leadership competency, to promote innovation and guide change.

The employment success of the current MPP graduates who enter the program directly from an undergraduate degree is one useful indicator of market interest in policy graduates with a digital focus. However, while that existing program answers an entry-level need for a new generation of policy leaders trained to respond to the opportunities and challenges of our evolving and increasingly digitally mediated society, our research tells us that there remains a gap in skills and core understandings of digital at higher levels of the hierarchy. Our preparatory stakeholder research, with a range of academic, public, private, and non-profit centre stakeholders revealed a repeated finding that attempts at digital innovation often encounter resistance and risk reticence at higher organisational levels, which our respondents attributed to a lack of digital fluency. The MPP-DSSL is directly targeted to individuals at those higher executive and management levels and in decision-making positions or who aspire to that level.

Data collected in the federal 2022 Public Service Employee Survey supports these stakeholder perceptions. In the category of leadership, there were uniform decreases from the 2020 survey in the percentage of respondents who felt that senior management made effective and timely decisions (55%, down from 60%) or that change is managed well (51%, down from 60%). The Public Policy Forum, in their 2019 report, Developing Canada's Digital-Ready Public Service, noted that data suggests 40% of public service organisations are not prepared for digital transformation.

More anecdotally, the recent ArriveCan debate is a topical indicator of the social need this program can fill. Aaron Snow, the former chief executive of the Canadian Digital Service, described the problem succinctly in a Globe and Mail interview on February 10, 2024 while discussing a scathing Auditor General's report regarding the app: "I think there's still a fair amount of acceptance of, I think, a broken idea, which is that it's okay for people to rise to the top of government service without having an understanding of how technology and software work and are developed and maintained. I think that's dangerous." If we take seriously that danger, the MPP-DSSL is a program tailored for the current policy and labour market moment.

1.6.2 Evidence of Student Demand:

Our target student for this professional, executive level program, is a mid-career professional in a policy-related role in either the public, private, or civil society sector, who wishes to pursue a graduate degree to enhance their leadership skills and increase their understanding of and competence in digital policy practices relating to emerging and evolving technologies. We anticipate attracting students with five to seven years of work experience and a four-year bachelor's degree from a wide range of disciplines. Policy professionals entering the program are expected to span the full range of undergraduate degrees in social science, humanities, and science. Applicants whose professional experience is in more technical areas such as system, project, or product management may also have the necessary experience to participate, as might individuals with alternative educational achievements such as a relevant college degree but with extensive relevant work experience.

It is challenging to assess demand for a program so completely new to the Canadian market. Our primary evidence for demand is based on the stakeholder research conducted that confirmed our assessment that there is a market gap, and subsequent conversations with key stakeholders in the public service in particular who provided feedback that the courses we propose will fill a gap in

workforce knowledge. We expect a competitive advantage in being the first mover in this program area. In addition, the current undergraduate entry level MPP program at McMaster regularly receives inquiries from working professional seeking a part-time version that can be completed while continuing to work during the day. The cohort-based full-time and intensive design of the existing MPP cannot accommodate such an approach; nor is that program designed for individuals with significant policy experience Given costs, both financial and personal, of engaging in study while working full-time, our focus will be on providing an individually rewarding, academically rigorous, and practically relevant learning experience that builds word-of-mouth brand recognition. Like the McMaster Executive MBA in the De Groote School of Business, or the Executive Master of Communication Management in the Faculty of Humanities, enrolment targets will be set to a level that will provide networking and relationship building opportunities but still ensure a personalised program experience.

1.6.3 Justifiable Duplication:

While there are a small number of executive-level MPP degree programs globally (such as the London School of Economics which offers a civil service executive level MPP program, the executive MPP offered by Oregon State, or the executive MPP at the Australian National University), McMaster's would be the first in Canada. Most professional MPP programs in Canada are full-time and accept students directly from a bachelor's degree, including McMaster's own Master of Public Policy program, with its streams in Digital Society and Housing policy. The proposed MPP-DSSL will be additive rather than duplicative of the current MPP program at McMaster, building on the brand differentiation in digital expertise that stakeholder research indicates is McMaster's strength in this field but with new objectives and goals, reflected in new courses, for a distinct audience.

External programs: We have identified only four partially comparable part-time professional master's degree programs aimed at or accessible to working policy professionals in Canada, although the majority are focused on public administration rather than public policy. There is only one comparable program that has a policy focus, and it is in Ontario at York University, which offers a degree in public policy, administration, and law. That program is offered in person and requires an individual to be present in Toronto for classes weekly, although the degree may be completed part-time. Elsewhere in Canada, Dalhousie University offers a part-time version of its public administration (management) degree, also in person, and there are two online or partially online programs in Western Canada: a joint program between the University of Saskatchewan and Regina that offers a Master of Public Administration online with brief residencies, and one at the University of Victoria which offers a part-time fully online master's degree in public administration.

The proposed executive-level MPP-DSSL differs from these comparators in that they offer either Master of Public Administration (MPA) or in York's case, a mix of law, administration and policy (MPPAL). York and Dalhousie's programs are in-person, unlike our intended blended learning approach. The two western Canadian programs are online (Victoria) or blended (Saskatchewan) but are focused not on policy but on public administration. None of the external comparators have the digital and technical focus of our potential offering.

Internal Programs: As noted, the proposed MPP-DSSL differs from McMaster's existing MPP streams in Digital Society and Housing in terms of audience, objectives, format and curriculum (see Appendix A).

McMaster also offers a master's level policy degree in the Faculty of Engineering. The Master of Engineering and Public Policy (MEPP) is a research-based program held in person and focusing on the interface between engineering, science and policy for full or part-time students who can be accepted directly out of an undergraduate degree. The MPP-DSSL is directed to a very different student population with a different curricular focus, and the Faculty of Engineering are supportive of our proposed executive professional program. MPP-DSSL students will benefit from the interdisciplinary approach to public policy in the program through the collaboration with Engineering, which leverages the strengths of combining policy and technological expertise to gain a deeper and broader understanding of both. These combined strengths underlie the solutions pillar of the MPP-DSSL program.

The De Groote School of Business is advancing a new degree program, a Master of Management in Applied AI and Analytics, a blended program targeted towards individuals with four or more years of general management background. Although that program will be directed towards working business professionals with at least four years of experience, their focus is on analytics interpretation and business value, subject matter that is distinct from digital policy and would not be attractive to the same audience as the MPP-DSSL from subject matter or career progression perspectives.

The De Groote School also offers a part-time blended MBA and an executive MBA program, but the curriculum for those degrees is firmly grounded in management literatures and practices, even where it engages with technological change. As a public policy focused program, the proposed MPP-DSSL is neither duplicative in subject matter or academic perspective, nor does it compete for the same student audience as these degree offerings, and the De Groote School is supportive of our proposed program. As with our collaboration with the Engineering and Public Policy Program, students will gain the benefit of the DeGroote School's expertise in management and leadership as a key pillar of the MPP-DSSL. The continuing collaboration of both Engineering and Business faculties on the development and planning of the MPP-DSSL is indicative of their implicit assessments that the MPP-DSSL targets a different student audience with distinct sets of learning needs and goals than do the existing and developing programs in both of those faculties.

1.7 DEGREE NOMENCLATURE

A Master of Public Policy (MPP) is the most appropriate degree nomenclature for an executive professional graduate program of this type. The MPP is an established and recognized nomenclature in Canada and internationally.

2. ADMISSION & ENROLMENT

2.1. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Admissions decisions for this professional program for mature students will be based on personal qualities and professional practice or experience in addition to academic achievement. Evaluation materials will include an application package and an admissions interview for short-listed applicants.

Admission criteria include:

- An Honours Bachelor's degree or equivalent professional degree from an accredited university with a B+ average in the final year of study in those courses relevant to the field of public policy
- Five or more years of full-time professional experience in public policy, policy or government relations roles within industry, or a related field.
- Two letters of recommendation, including one from the current employer. (If the applicant is an independent consultant, this letter can be from a current client or business partner).
- A current Curriculum Vitae/resume
- A copy of official transcripts of all academic work completed to date, sent directly from the issuing institution(s). If the final transcript does not show that a completed degree has been conferred, an official copy of the conferred diploma is also required. Transcripts should indicate years of attendance, subjects each year, grades, and degree(s) awarded.
- For applicants whose first language is not English and who did not attend an English-speaking university for their undergraduate degree, a test of English language proficiency is required. Minimum scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language TOEFL are: written score 600 or computer 250, or Internet-based test IBT = 92; reading = 22, speaking = 24, listening = 24, and writing = 22. Other tests approved by McMaster University may be acceptable.
- A personal statement (maximum 500 words) explaining interest and suitability for the program and potential for completing it.
- A personal interview with the Director and/or member(s) of the Admissions Committee, either in person or online. This interview will assess applicant readiness for the program and ensure that the applicant is fully aware of all aspects of the program and the commitment needed for successful completion.

The admissions committee will review every application to the program to ensure that prospective students have the necessary academic background, proficiency in English, and relevant experience to enroll in the MPP–DSSL.

2.2. ENROLMENT PLANNING AND ALLOCATIONS

Academic Year	Cohort Year 1	Cohort Year 2	Cohort Year 3	Cohort Year 4	Cohort Year 5	Cohort Year 6	Cohort Year 7	Total Enrolment	Maturity
2025-26	10							10	
2026-27		12						12	
2027-28			15					15	
2028-29				18				18	
2029-30					20			20	
2030-31						23		23	
2031-32							25	25	25

2.3. ALTERNATIVE REQUIREMENTS

There may be applicants who do not satisfy the admission requirement of a four-year Honours undergraduate degree with a B+ average in the final year, or whose professional experience is in more technical areas such as system, project, or product management. Such work experience may still have direct relevance to the MPP-DSSL program. Completed course work or credentials instead of, or beyond, the bachelor's degree such as a college degree or certificate may also have bearing on the applicant's ability to participate fully in, and to complete, this graduate program. Accordingly, the program will consider Applicants that do not meet the admission requirements if they have a minimum of five to seven years of experience in a public policy and/or digital based work environment and possess some managerial or director level of experience. Each Applicant falling under the alternative requirements admissions process will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Should such a student be short-listed during the application review process, admission to graduate studies in the executive-level MPP-DSSL will be based on the following expanded admissions requirements:

- **Three** letters of recommendation, including one from the current employer. (If the applicant is an independent consultant, this letter can be from a current client or business partner).
- A current Curriculum Vitae/resume
- A copy of official transcripts of all academic work completed to date, sent directly from the issuing institution(s). If the final transcript does not show that a completed degree has been conferred, an official copy of the conferred diploma is also required. Transcripts should indicate years of attendance, subjects each year, grades, and degree(s) awarded.
- For applicants whose first language is not English and who did not attend an English-speaking university for their undergraduate degree, a test of English language proficiency is required. Minimum scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language TOEFL are: written score 600 or computer 250, or Internet-based test IBT = 92; reading = 22, speaking = 24, listening = 24, and writing = 22. Other tests approved by McMaster University may be acceptable.
- A personal statement (maximum 500 words) explaining interest and suitability for the program and potential for completing it.
- A portfolio of recent work that demonstrates the necessary abilities to meet the program learning outcomes of the MPP – DSSL at a graduate level standard.
- A personal panel interview with the Director and at least one member of the Admissions Committee, either in person or online. This interview will assess applicant background knowledge and readiness for the program and ensure that the applicant is fully aware of all aspects of the program and the commitment needed for successful completion.

Prospective students who fall into this alternate category will have their applications assessed by the program director and admissions committee with particular focus on the relevance of the work experience, the demonstrated achievements of the candidate in their professional practice, the documentation provided and the mandatory interview process.

2.4. ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE ADMISSIONS PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

Principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility are central to McMaster's educational approach and will sit at the core of the MPP-DSSL admissions process. Our admissions assessment and alternative assessment structure will allow all potential students to demonstrate their eligibility for admission and takes into consideration the breadth of experience and knowledge they bring, including work experience, personal statements, and interviews. We will further provide a range of written and oral formats for these submissions which can enhance accessibility. Application review will explicitly include EDI considerations in a structured assessment rubric.

3. STRUCTURE

3.1. ADMINISTRATIVE, GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATION

The executive-level MPP-DSSL will be offered as an interdisciplinary blended learning educational program housed within the Faculty of Social Sciences, related to, but distinct from, the existing MPP program. Administrative support will be provided by a .2 FTE program coordinator shared with the MPP, and an administrative director, anticipated in the first year of operation to be a CLA appointment with 60% administrative and 40% teaching responsibilities.

Teaching resources will be drawn from the Faculty of Social Sciences, building on relationships with the current Master of Public Policy Program, and (anticipated) from the DeGroote School of Business and the Faculty of Engineering, with whom we have support and commitments to pursue collaboration. The role of Academic Director, a faculty member who will have primary responsibility for overseeing the MPP–DSSL, will be shared with the core Master of Public Policy Program. The day-to-day program administration will be undertaken by an administrative director and includes:

- Developing the annual course and teaching allocation plans.
- Developing initial curriculum expectations and preparing curricular revisions.
- Leading student recruitment and the admissions process and monitoring student enrolment numbers.
- ~~Organising~~Organizing and overseeing intensive weeks and asynchronous curriculum production.
- Overseeing periodic program reviews, including the IQAP process of quality assessment.

The Academic Director will normally be selected from faculty members in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Overseeing the governance structure of the MPP-DSSL program is the Office of the Dean, which has responsibility for the Faculty, and which includes the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies and Research) who will provide support to the MPP-DSSL educational program and associated faculty research activities. The Associate Dean Graduate Studies and the Associate Dean Research also provides an organizational link into the University's School of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Vice-President of Research.

3.2. STRUCTURE AND REGULATION

All six of the three-unit seminar courses listed as part of the executive-level MPP-DSSL will be required

courses. Three additional 1.5-unit skills-based policy lab intensives will also be required and will be chosen each year by the program team to reflect topics of relevance and interest to that year's cohort from an approved list of potential courses. The courses meet University requirements in terms of the minimum number of courses required, the level of courses required, and the inclusion of other required elements appropriate for the degree level and the students' level of professional experience.

The course design and calendar description of all course offerings are available in Section 4.1 of this proposal below.

3.3. GRADUATE PROGRAMS - PROGRAM LENGTH

The executive-level MPP-DSSL Program will be a professional 12-month, part-time, course-based program. It will progress over three semesters. First entrance will be in the winter semester, and classes will be held over three consecutive terms, winter, summer and fall.

4. CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

4.1. PROGRAM CONTENT

Across the duration of the program12 continuous months, the program will require students will be required -to complete six (6) 3-unit graduate seminar-style courses in an online synchronous and asynchronous format, three (3) 3-unit graduate seminar-style courses delivered in an in-person and intensive/residency format, and three (3) 1.5-unit skills-based policy lab-intensives. The curriculum spans three broad topic areas:

- understanding public policy and digital technology and governance in and through policy,
- using digital tools to accomplish policy goals/lead policy work, and
- regulating technologies and digitally mediated activities in a data-driven world.

The special topic skills-based policy lab-intensives will address practical skills on topics of current interest.

It is anticipated that the seminar and skills topics may change over time, subject to standard course change and approval processes. This structure will help students achieve a broad, substantive understanding of how digital technologies are both an enabler of policy and a subject of policy, and how digital tools and digital approaches can facilitate policy design, implementation and evaluation, while staying topical and up to date regarding the technologies and practices relevant for each cohort. Each course will also incorporate aspects of ethics, decolonization and equity, diversity and inclusion as key considerations within their relevant subject matter-.

The program will provide a blended learning opportunity tailored to working professionals, with three 3 intensive/residency sixfive-day in-person residency periodcourses bracketsupported ed by asynchronous and synchronous online learning.

Students will take the following courses to complete their degree under any of the program options:

    a. Intensive Courses

i. Foundations of Democratic Governance and Public Policy [3 units | Intensive /Residency Seminar]

Course Description: This course will establish the foundational knowledge to understand and explore the democratic governance and public administration of and the making of public policy in Canada. It will situate these theoretical foundations in debates and problems facing Canada using a case study-based approach on current and contemporary issues.

THIS INTENSTIVE/RESDIENCY SEMINAR WILL BE OFFERED IN WEEK ONE OF THE FIRST SEMESTER

ii. Leadership and Strategic Challenges in Digital Industries and Digital Governance [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar]

Course Description: Building off of the **Leading People, leading policy in the digital society** course in the first semester, this intensive seminar will focus on challenges and opportunities brought about by digital work environments, the increasing use and incorporation of technologies into government and the work-place and the need for leadership in changing and dynamic environments. Instruction will draw upon case studies reflecting current issues, problems and opportunities in government and private sector workplace environments.

THIS INTENSIVE/RESIDENCY SEMINAR WILL BE OFFERED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SECOND SEMESTER (ROUGHLY WEEK 7)

iii. Policy Design and Delivery – Capstone Project [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar]

Course description: Working in groups, students will address a current challenge facing governments in Canada today through the delivery of a comprehensive policy brief that serves as a summative experience in the program. The policy brief will incorporate both an analysis of the existing challenge and the corresponding policies created or modified to address it and a novel policy design to overcome the continuing challenge.

THIS INTENSIVE/RESIDENCY SEMINAR WILL BE OFFERED IN THE FINAL WEEK OF THE THIRD SEMESTER

    b. Seminar Courses

i. Advanced Policy for Practitioners [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: This course focuses on the advanced theory and practice of policy design, introducing learners to classic and digitally inspired policy methodologies, including strategic design thinking and agile methods and tools for policymaking. Instruction will draw on case studies reflecting current issues in digital policy.

ii. Leading people, leading policy in the digital society [3 units | Seminar]
Course description: This course will focus on four core leadership competencies: values and ethics, strategic thinking, engagement, and management excellence. In this context, students will be provided with opportunities to foster their own leadership skills and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be effective leaders and communicators.

iii. Evolving Policy for Present and Future Technologies [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: Virtually all policy sectors have experienced disruption due to technology. In some it is the introduction of technologies within existing processes (e.g., new ways of working facilitated by technology). In others it requires grappling with the new opportunities and risks of emerging or evolving technologies in or across particular policy arenas. This course provides a technical overview of a range of contemporary and emerging technologies and takes a deep dive into their policy implications, including questions of social uptake/backlash, and the relationship between the state and transformative technologies, past, present and future.

iv. Putting research and data to work for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]
Course description: This course prepares learners to apply their understanding of a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods to analyse contemporary digital policy problems and evaluate policy solutions. It will introduce fundamental concepts in statistics such that students can competently assess evidence which relies on the application of data analysis to public policy applications.

v. Navigating the tech economy for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: Students will use an economic lens to explore policy and governance questions linked to the evolving role of tech companies, big and small, in society and the ways policy has, can, or should develop to ensure technology contributes economically and socially to the public good. This course will use case studies that foreground a range of big and small tech business models to focus on the theory, practice, and challenges in public-private partnerships, procurement, and relationships between the public and private sectors.

vi. Digital Regulation in Canada: Current Issues and Opportunities [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: This course will focus on the intersection of Canadian law and digital policy. Learners will explore current digital policy bills and recent acts and examine the ways in which laws and regulations interact with existing precedents and have been, or can be, developed to address emerging policy problems. Committee processes and stakeholder engagement in developing governance instruments will also be addressed as part of the policy landscape in this area.

a.c. Policy Skills Labs Courses

i. AI: Functionality, safety, responsibility, and ethics [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: Artificial intelligence is a burgeoning field subject to intense policy debate, one that requires a degree of baseline understanding on the part of policymakers tasked with developing governance models or guiding implementations. This course will provide practical instruction in various types of AI, responsible AI governance and data practices, and ethical use frameworks and impact assessments.

ii. Public Consultation and Engagement [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: This course will explore practical approaches to public consultation, including approaches/methods for identifying and engaging with stakeholders, managing risk, and analysing, reporting and leveraging consultation results in policy processes.

iii. Cybersecurity for policy makers [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: This intensive will provide students with an introduction to the technical and policy aspects of security, surveillance and conflict, techniques of risk analysis and threat-modeling, and engage with issues at the intersection of cyber policy and technology.

I. The anticipated schedule of the MPP-DSSL is as follows:

TERM 1 (JAN – APR)

Advanced Policy for Practitioners [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: This course focuses on the advanced theory and practice of policy design, introducing learners to classic and digitally inspired policy methodologies, including strategic design thinking and agile methods and tools for policymaking. Instruction will draw on case studies reflecting current issues in digital policy.

Leading people, leading policy in the digital society [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: This course will focus on four core leadership competencies: values and ethics, strategic thinking, engagement, and management excellence. In this context, students will be provided with opportunities to foster their own leadership skills and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be effective leaders and communicators.

AI: Functionality, safety, responsibility, and ethics [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: Artificial intelligence is a burgeoning field subject to intense policy debate, one that requires a degree of baseline understanding on the part of policymakers tasked with developing governance models or guiding implementations. This course will provide practical instruction in various types of AI, responsible AI governance and data practices, and ethical use frameworks and impact assessments.

TERM 2 (MAY-AUG)

Evolving Policy for Present and Future Technologies [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: Virtually all policy sectors have experienced disruption due to technology. In some it is the introduction of technologies within existing processes (e.g., new ways of working facilitated by technology). In others it requires grappling with the new opportunities and risks of emerging or evolving technologies in or across particular policy arenas. This course provides a technical overview of a range of contemporary and emerging technologies and takes a deep dive into their policy implications, including questions of social uptake/backlash, and the relationship between the state and transformative technologies, past, present and future.

Putting research and data to work for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: This course prepares learners to apply their understanding of a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods to analyse contemporary digital policy problems and evaluate policy solutions. It will introduce fundamental concepts in statistics such that students can competently assess evidence which relies on the application of data analysis to public policy applications.

Public Consultation and Engagement [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: This course will explore practical approaches to public consultation, including approaches/methods for identifying and engaging with stakeholders, managing risk, and analysing, reporting and leveraging consultation results in policy processes.

TERM 3 (SEPT-DEC)

Navigating the tech economy for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: Students will use an economic lens to explore policy and governance questions linked to the evolving role of tech companies, big and small, in society and the ways policy has, can, or should develop to ensure technology contributes economically and socially to the public good. This course will use case studies that foreground a range of big and small tech business models to focus on the theory, practice, and challenges in public-private partnerships, procurement, and relationships between the public and private sectors.

Digital Regulation in Canada: Current Issues and Opportunities [3 units | Seminar]

Course description: This course will focus on the intersection of Canadian law and digital policy. Learners will explore current digital policy bills and recent acts and examine the ways in which laws and regulations interact with existing precedents and have been, or can be, developed to address emerging policy problems. Committee processes and stakeholder engagement in developing governance instruments will also be addressed as part of the policy landscape in this area.

Cybersecurity for policy makers [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

I. Course description: This intensive will provide students with an introduction to the technical and policy aspects of security, surveillance and conflict, techniques of risk analysis and threat modeling, and engage with issues at the intersection of cyber policy and technology.

Additional skills labs under consideration/for subsequent years following appropriate approvals.

Interpreting Economic Indicators [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: This course introduces key economic indicators, from big-picture data like inflation and unemployment, to sector data such as home and auto sales, placing them in the context of economic and social policy.

Data Governance and Stewardship [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: Every area of policy increasingly must consider data, as a resource or risk, as evidence for policy, or as a byproduct of doing business. This course will look at the data lifecycle, examine data governance and stewardship principles and privacy law, and introduce Indigenous data principles.

Internet Governance for Policy Makers [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: This intensive will provide students with a firm understanding of the principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that share the evolution and use of the internet, and the technological foundations on which it is based.

Digital Rights and Human Rights [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

Course description: Digital rights are human rights. Students will explore the ways in which digital technologies and the digital policies that govern and/or regulate them impact human rights including freedom of expression, freedom of association, privacy, and access to information. Students will develop familiarity with civil society actors in Canada and elsewhere who work in digital rights and digital justice.

Optional course: Directed Studies [3 units]

Course description: A directed reading course on selected subjects related to developing an advanced understanding of an area of policy theory or practice.

The anticipated schedule of the MPP-DSSL is as follows:

    I.   FAST TRACK OPTION

TERM 1 (JAN – APR)

I1. Foundations of Democratic Governance and Public Policy [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar – beginning of semester]

S1. Advanced Policy for Practitioners [3 units | Seminar]

S2. Leading people, leading policy in the digital society [3 units | Seminar]

L1. AI: Functionality, safety, responsibility, and ethics [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

TERM 2 (MAY-AUG)

I2. Leadership and Strategic Challenges in Digital Industries and Digital Governance [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar – mid-semester]

S3. Evolving Policy for Present and Future Technologies [3 units | Seminar]

S4. Putting research and data to work for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]

L2. Public Consultation and Engagement [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

TERM 3 (SEPT-DEC)

I3. Policy Design and Delivery – Capstone Project [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar – end of semester]

S5. Navigating the tech economy for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]

S6. Digital Regulation in Canada: Current Issues and Opportunities [3 units | Seminar]

L3. Cybersecurity for policy makers [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

    II.   Gradual Option

For students in the gradual option, it will be recommended that they structure the program to reduce the workload where possible by alternating Intensive/Residency Seminar Courses and Skills Labs Courses accordingly.

TERM 1 (JAN – APR – Year 1)

I1. Foundations of Democratic Governance and Public Policy [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar – beginning of semester]

S1. Leading people, leading policy in the digital society [3 units | Seminar]

L1. AI: Functionality, safety, responsibility, and ethics [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]
OPTIONAL – BUT RECOMMENDED FOR YEAR 2

TERM 2 (MAY-AUG – Year 1)

I2. Leadership and Strategic Challenges in Digital Industries and Digital Governance [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar – mid-semester]
OPTIONAL – BUT RECOMMENDED FOR YEAR 2.

S2. Putting research and data to work for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]

L2. Public Consultation and Engagement [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]
OPTIONAL – RECOMMENDED IN YEAR 1 UNLESS INTENSIVE/RESIDENCY COURSE TAKEN IN YEAR 1.

TERM 3 (SEPT-DEC – Year 1)

S3. Navigating the tech economy for policy makers [3 units | Seminar]

L3. Cybersecurity for policy makers [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]

TERM 4 (JAN – APR – Year Two)

S4. Advanced Policy for Practitioners [3 units | Seminar]

L1. AI: Functionality, safety, responsibility, and ethics [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]
REQUIRED IF NOT TAKEN IN YEAR 1. RECOMMENDED IN YEAR 2.

TERM 5 (MAY-AUG – Year Two)

I2. Leadership and Strategic Challenges in Digital Industries and Digital Governance [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar – mid-semester]
REQUIRED IF NOT TAKEN IN YEAR 1. RECOMMENDED IN YEAR 2.

S.5 Evolving Policy for Present and Future Technologies [3 units | Seminar]

L2. Public Consultation and Engagement [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]
REQUIRED IF NOT TAKEN IN YEAR 1. RECOMMENDED IN YEAR 1.

TERM 6 (SEPT-DEC – Year Two)

13. Policy Design and Delivery – Capstone Project [3 units | Intensive/Residency Seminar – end of semester]

S6. Digital Regulation in Canada: Current Issues and Opportunities [3 units | Seminar]

L3. Cybersecurity for policy makers [1.5 units | Skills-based policy lab]
REQUIRED IF NOT TAKEN IN YEAR 1. RECOMMENDED IN YEAR 1.

4.2. PROGRAM INNOVATION

The MPP-DSSL is to our knowledge the first executive-level professional program of its kind in Canada. It draws upon the guiding principles in the McMaster Digital Learning Strategic Framework in creating an innovative new learning opportunity that is flexible, engaging learners where they are using digital tools with a blended learning approach. While there are many "one off" single topic executive/post-degree learning opportunities for mature learners in the market, there is no other graduate level program that integrates the theoretical and practical education needed for contemporary digital policymakers or policymaking.

In keeping with the McMaster approach to integrating theoretical and experiential learning, the MPP-DSSL will mix traditional seminar-style courses with experiential practical skills workshops, using technology to enhance courses and create a rigorous yet flexible learning experience. The one-week intensive in-person residencies each term will provide opportunities for student networking and hands-on learning in our skills workshops, while the remainder of materials, presented through a mix of high-quality asynchronous content and synchronous online classes will create a productive learning environment that sets a high academic bar while building in the necessary flexibility for working mid-career professionals.

4.3. MODE(S) OF DELIVERY

The executive-level MPP-DSSL employs multiple modes of delivery to create an engaging and comprehensive learning experience for students. It offers a blended learning experience, providing a mix of online and in-person learning formats, with synchronous and asynchronous components and will draw on the resources and expertise available through McMaster's MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching to support faculty and program staff to develop curricular materials, including high-quality video materials.

Each course will begin with an online orientation, followed by a series of asynchronous lectures and activities for each seminar topic. A residenceThe intensive/residency course week in each semester will provide students with the opportunity to connect as a cohort, to focus intensively on their studies away from their work-world, and to engage with seminar instructors in depth and in person, and to participate in hands-on and group activities for their practical skills workshops. The skills to be developed in the skills

labs se workshops will vary by course, from learning how artificial intelligence works and experimenting with, and evaluating, a range of models relevant to policymaking, to developing a model for consultation prior to the provision of a particular digital service, to developing a cybersecurity plan for a division or department, grounded in an understanding of risks, available tools, and policy imperatives. In each case, a problem-based learning approach will be taken. FollowingIn keeping with the fully blended learning opportunity that the mix of learning approaches amd methods take, the residence week, a series of synchronous online classesstudents will be fully supported throughout the program students as they complete assignments remotely and consolidate and extend their understanding of the materials.

4.4. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Assignments for each seminar and skills workshop will include opportunities to bring problems or experience from the students' professional practice and experience into the classroom, focusing on practical utility but framed and evaluated based on academic criteria with graduate-level expectations.

4.5. ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

The proposed program prioritizes inclusion and accessibility in the following ways:

Recruitment and Admission: From recruitment to admissions to student support during the program, the program will deliberately seek to attract and include diverse peoples and perspectives from across the full range of sociocultural and individual identities that make up Canadian society. This focus on diversity is one that mirrors that of public service bodies in Canada, federally, provincially, territorially, and municipally which are the primary sources for our recruitment, aligning our program with its audience in a meaningful way.

Buildings/Residency sites: The program will offer residencies in accessible spaces that accommodate any mobility or other requirements students identify. The on-campus residency will be in the LR Wilson Building which is fully accessible. We will draw on the event accessibility resources of the McMaster Accessibility Hub to ensure all appropriate steps are taken for in-person components of the program.

Curriculum: In-person, o Online and asynchronous materials will be designed to comply with appropriate accessibility standards including the objectives set out by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the McMaster University Accessibility Plan. McMaster Accessibility Hub resources on teaching and learning and digital accessibility will provide a foundation to assist this compliance. Instruction will further include a focus on inclusive excellence, a concept defined in the McMaster Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy as recognizing "the integral relationship between diversity and quality" in teaching, amongst other core university activities.

MPP-DSSL students will complete SGS 201/Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training, as all McMaster graduate students must do.

4.6. RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS (IF APPLICABLE)

There will not be a required major research project for this professional program.

5. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

5.1. OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY

The overall quality of the program will be monitored using a range of evaluation measures and performance indicators. The initial course syllabi will be designed with the support of the Academic Director and program administrator to ensure coherence, progression, and consistency across the full suite of courses in this cohort-based program. Weight will be given to student feedback, which will be sought through anonymous course surveys at the end of each course using the standard McMaster course evaluation infrastructure, but also as an ongoing process throughout the program year. Synchronous online opportunities and anonymous feedback opportunities will be provided mid-term, to ensure courses are progressing in a manner that supports student learning and meets their expectations of a professional program. Course instructors will also participate in a debriefing session at the conclusion of the semester with the program administrator and faculty advisor to identify opportunities for learning enhancement through strategic adjustment of curriculum, assignments, and course expectations/goals. Points to be assessed through this range of methods will include the appropriateness of the program and class structure, including student evaluation, to achieve program-level outcomes, the appropriateness and effectiveness of course delivery in the blended learning model, and the ways in which the curriculum addresses the current needs of professional policy makers in the digital sphere.

The MPP program and the Faculty of Social Sciences will also collect robust data to inform program refinement. After the completion of the first two cohorts, the Faculty of Social Sciences will conduct a formal review of enrollment and program completion data, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, faculty and staff satisfaction, and other variables considered important to make programming, curriculum, and staffing adjustments as required.

Formatted: Font: 11 pt
Formatted: Font: 11 pt

5.2. METHODS FOR ASSESSING STUDENTS

The executive-level MPP-DSSL will use a diverse range of assessment modes across its seminar and skills intensive courses to evaluate student achievement in different ways across the learning objectives. Approaches will vary by course type. Seminar courses, which are more focused on conceptual knowledge, and bringing that knowledge into the context of students' professional experiences, will rely on analytical papers and case studies, but also include critical analyses of legislation, policy briefs and white papers, participating in class discussions, and orally presenting assignments with supporting visual content.

Skills workshops will use a similarly diverse range of assessment methods, including skills tests, hands-on exercises or reflections, simulations, or practical outputs relevant to the subject matter. For example, in

a data governance workshop, an outcome might be a privacy impact assessment, developed individually or in groups based on materials provided during the workshop.

Student achievement will be assessed, tracked, and documented across cohorts to inform continuous program improvement.

5.3. CURRICULUM MAP

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)		Program Requirements	
By the end of the program, student graduating with a Masters degree will….	**Master's Degree Level Expectations (DLEs)**	**Teaching Activities & Learning Opportunities**	**Assessments and Evidence**
	For each PLO, identify which DLE(s) it aligns with below	For each PLO, what teaching activities and learning opportunities are students exposed to that will help them to achieve that PLO?	For each PLO, what is specifically collected from the students as evidence that they can/have achieved the PLO before they graduate?
Demonstrate a systematic interdisciplinary understanding of key theories and models of public policy at the forefront of the profession and field of study in the context of digital transformation	Depth and Breadth of knowledge; Research and Scholarship	Seminar courses, especially: Advanced Policy for Practitioners; Navigating the tech economy; Evolving Policy for Present and Future Technologies; Digital Regulation in Canada	Graded assessments of course requirements including written assignments and oral presentations and class participation.
Analyze public policy issues using professionally accepted methodologies and conceptual tools with an appropriate level of critical understanding, and develop prospective solutions for complex policy problems and related ethical issues	Application of knowledge; Awareness of limits of knowledge; Autonomy and professional capacity	Seminar Courses, especially: Advanced Policy for Practitioners; Putting Research and Data to Work All skills intensive workshops.	Graded assessments of course requirements including written assignments and oral presentations.
Develop an understanding of the affordances, risks and benefits of new and evolving technologies and articulate legislative and policy-relevant considerations for public or private	Depth and breadth of knowledge; Application of knowledge; Communication skills; Awareness of limits of knowledge	Seminar courses, especially: Evolving policy for present and future technologies; Navigating the tech economy; Digital regulation All skills intensive workshops.	Graded assessments of course requirements including written assignments and oral presentations.

sector contexts			
Assess and/or apply appropriate social science research methods and an understanding of data analytics to digital policy problems and to effectively identify and evaluate relevant social scientific research in the context of their professional practice.	Depth and breadth of knowledge; Research and scholarship; Application of knowledge; Awareness of limits of knowledge	Seminar Courses, especially: Putting Research and Data to Work All skills intensive workshops	Graded assessments of course requirements including written assignments and oral presentations.
Develop an understanding of theoretical and practical leadership skills and digital change management, with a demonstrated capacity to exercise initiative, make decisions in complex situations	Depth and breadth of knowledge; Communication skills; Autonomy and professional practice	Seminar courses, especially: Leading people, leading policy in the digital society.	Graded assessments of course requirements including written assignments and oral presentations; class participation.
Engage in effective written and oral communication for a range of policy stakeholders		All seminar courses	Graded assessments of course requirements including written assignments and oral presentations, class participation.

5.4. DEMONSTRATING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Student achievement will be demonstrated by graded performance in coursework across the seminar courses and pass with distinction/pass/fail assessments in skills-based policy labs.
An additional factor demonstrating student achievement for this professional program will be the demonstration of an increased ability to apply course materials and learning to their workplace, as self-identified by students through formal and informal feedback mechanisms that will be integrated throughout the program.

The administrative director will be responsible for compiling grade and student feedback data, conveying it to instructors and the program's academic director, and recommending any necessary adjustments to the program's structure, curriculum, or other elements as required for continuous improvement. The academic director will also be available to meet with students to discuss their performance and any issues that limited their performance and achievement.

6. RESOURCES – GRADUATE PROGRAMS

6.1. ADMINISTRATIVE, PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Administrative: Initially we anticipate the core and executive MPP programs sharing an academic director and receiving modest administrative support from the current MPP program coordinator. The current academic director and program coordinator would be able to support this workload with additional support from an MPP-DSSL administrative program director. That position is currently envisioned as a CLA position with 60% of time for administration and 40% for teaching. The level of activity associated with a professional, executive level program, including personalised recruitment, centralised course coordination and consistent updating, and coordination of anticipated public sector and industry co-instructors requires dedicated staff support. The program will be located within the Faculty of Social Sciences and will be able to call upon its administrative infrastructure, along with the broader university administrative infrastructure. Teaching faculty will be required for two 3.0-unit seminars and one 1.5-unit skills-based policy lab each semester.

Physical: As a blended program with limited in-person residency periods, permanent space requirements initially are limited to an office for the MPP-DSSL Program Director, currently anticipated to be provided in space used by the MPP in the Digital Society Lab in L.R. Wilson Hall. Long term, MPP-DSSL space is part of a larger need for dedicated MPP program space. Space for the three week-long residencies, which are the in-person component for the MPP–DSSL, will be sourced in some combination of spaces at the main McMaster campus in Hamilton, Ontario, McMaster's Ron Joyce Centre in Burlington, Ontario, or the McMaster offsite space in Toronto, Ontario. We are also considering other off-campus locations that would be central and attractive for mature students taking time from work to invest in their career and providing the appropriate amenities for intensive learning.

Financial: The program will be funded through professional-level student tuition. There will be no scholarships or other commitments from faculty research funding necessary for this part-time professional program.

6.2. LIBRARY, TECHNOLOGY, AND LABORATORY RESOURCES

The library and information technology support available from McMaster University will be adequate to support students' learning and scholarship, including excellent access to online journal subscriptions and online databases which will be the resources most relevant for our remote students in this blended learning program.

6.3. FACULTY

The Public Policy Program at McMaster, which now offers a Master of Public Policy with two streams, Digital Society and Housing policy, currently sits in the Faculty of Social Sciences as an independent unit, with close relationships to Political Science, Economics, Health, Aging and Society, and Sociology who contribute teaching resources. The program shares two faculty members with Political Science who do 50% of their teaching in each unit and has an Interim and a permanent Academic Director from that

department. The program also has one Economics faculty member who regularly teaches a course in the core MPP. Existing Public Policy Program faculty have methodological expertise in quantitative and qualitative methods, and research and teaching interests in public policy, digital transformation, user-centred policy, social media in public administration, election law and policy, digital policy, immigration policy, attitudes to digital technology, competition, democratic participation, and more. Many current program faculty and staff also maintain active engagement in policy interventions at a practical, professional level, including invitational involvement in digital policy consultations, submitting policy briefs to public consultations and serving as expert witnesses before parliamentary and senate committees, activities highly relevant and of interest to our anticipated student audience of mid-career policy professionals. This combination of academic and practical policy expertise in our teaching team provides a solid foundation for a professional, executive level public policy program.

Like the MPP, the executive-level MPP-DSSL will draw on a strong complement of permanent faculty members from those disciplines within the Faculty of Social Sciences. For this small program, which will offer six 3-unit seminars and three 1.5-unit practical skills intensive workshops, our faculty needs are relatively constrained while the field of potential instructors is both wide and deep. To supplement the expertise available in the Faculty of Social Sciences, in keeping with our goal of a truly interdisciplinary public policy executive degree, we are also developing formal collaborations with the DeGroote School of Business and the Faculty of Engineering which will include teaching resources focused on digital technology, strategic thinking and planning and leadership. We have written statements of interest for this collaboration and continue to refine these commitments, but it is anticipated that the exceptional depth of expertise within the DeGroote School in the areas of leadership can contribute to the MPP-DSSL planned Leadership seminar course (Leading people, leading policy). Collaboration with Engineering will bring an understanding of the ways technology works to seminars that focus on present and future technologies and in intensive skills labs that focus on areas of technical expertise, including artificial intelligence and cyber security.

The Public Policy Program also has an extensive network of policy professionals from the public service and industry who contribute as professors of practice or sessional instructors and whom the MPP-DSSL will also draw upon. Our 18-member advisory board, which includes individuals in C-suite roles in the public service federally and municipally, technology companies including Google and Facebook, and corporations such as Telus and Deloitte are a valuable resource to assist in growing this instructor pool. We anticipate utilizing policy and industry professionals as instructors, under the guidance of the program's administrative and academic directors, for select skills labs where topical technological and policy expertise in a professional environment would provide valuable learning enhancement for our mid-career students. The executive-level MPP-DSSL projected budget includes provision for the professors of practice and sessional faculty members needed to deliver the specialised training anticipated to be part of the program.

6.4. STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Students will be self-funded in this executive level professional program. If the program becomes more than self-sustaining through tuition revenues, we will explore the option of creating a limited number of means-based scholarships for students to enhance accessibility, but these would be funded through external donations or tuition revenues.

6.5. FACULTY RESEARCH FUNDING

This professional program has no research component such that faculty research funding will be engaged, nor will faculty supervision be required.

7. QUALITY AND OTHER INDICATORS

7.1. ACADEMIC QUALITY OF THE PROGRAM

The executive-level MPP-DSSL will draw on the breadth and depth of faculty expertise and the additional educational enrichment provided by sessional instructors with specific professional expertise and teaching experience, and professors of practice with extensive public sector or industry policy expertise to deliver a program of excellent academic quality. As described above, the proposed MPP-DSSL involves a mix of synchronous and asynchronous, self-paced seminars and hands-on learning in intensive skills workshops that combines the high-quality graduate training already delivered in the departments of participating faculty members with the practical and applied training common to the best professional programs. The program will provide students with exciting opportunities to engage with complex emerging issues at the intersection of public policy and digital technologies with the academic rigour grounded in research expertise that McMaster is known for, with the level of interactivity, inclusion, and real-world impact that are features of McMaster's strategic teaching approach.

To demonstrate and document the quality of the program over the first five years we will rely on the following indicators as listed in sections 7.1.1 through 7.1.4.

4.1.1 Professional Productivity Measures
Student feedback will be collected regarding program impacts on their professional activities during and after, with data collected via student surveys.

Students will also be encouraged to bring real-world problems into the classroom and their assignments. Evaluation in some courses will include feedback by industry/policy experts and student achievement through that lens will be an important measure of the academic quality of the program.

4.1.2 Formative Assessment and Feedback
Students will be asked to complete in-program satisfaction surveys at the end of each term. In the second and subsequent year of the program, an annual alumni survey will also be conducted.

4.1.3 Employment opportunities
While our students will come to us as mature students who are studying part-time and working full-time in a policy relevant field, a critical marker of the quality of the program will be the promotion opportunities and remuneration improvements our graduates are able to obtain. We will monitor these through the regular alumni surveys and targeted alumni outreach.

4.1.4 Time to completion and retention

We have attempted to balance academic rigour and breadth and depth of content appropriate for a master's level degree with a workload per semester that is achievable for an ambitious working professional. We will monitor student times to completion to ensure that this balance is appropriately met. Similarly, student retention will provide a key indication of program quality.

7.2. INTELLECTUAL QUALITY OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The intellectual quality of the student experience will be fostered by the high quality of the faculty members involved in the program, and the blended learning approach which provides space for self-paced learning while also requiring highly focused engagement during the intensive learning period provided by the residency weeks. The program will bring working policy professionals into an academic environment and give them encouragement, space, and guidance to explore the academic concepts, models and ideas foundational to the policy field in a way that many will never have experienced. Those theoretical underpinnings of the field will be practically linked to and explored through issues in digital policy and emerging/evolving digital technologies, grounded in instruction to provide a firm understanding of how the relevant technologies work, their benefits, and their risks. This link between functionality, possibility, and policy is key to so many contemporary policy questions and our society misses opportunities for rights-respecting, innovative, and publicly beneficial policy development if policies are not grounded in the kind of understanding of digital technology that is more often considered to be the realm of engineers or computer scientists than policymakers. The MPP-DSSL is designed to help professional policy practitioners gain this expertise and take it forward into the workplace to foster imaginative new solutions to the policy problems that sit at the core of the digitization of the public service, and more broadly, Canadian society.

Our cohort model and course sequence will foster these skills in a cumulative progression, and the mix of individual study, seminar and facilitated online discussion, and in person learning and socialisation during residencies will provide a rich and varied learning experience that crosses from abstract to applied, and research to practice. Instruction by a mix of instructors, many of whom themselves bridge that academic and practical policy divide, will be key to the richness, the relevance, and the intellectual rigour of the student experience.

Please note that if the program is approved, some additional information will be requested:

- Brief program description which can be posted on the Quality Council website (1-2 paragraphs)
- Program details for OSAP eligibility purposes

TRACKING THE APPROVALS PROCESS FOR NEW GRADUATE PROGRAMS

PLEASE NOTE: This table must be appended to the New Program Proposal Document and updated as each step in the approvals process is completed.

STEP IN THE NEW PROGRAM APPROVALS PROCESS	NAME OF COMMITTEE/ INDIVIDUAL PROVIDING CONSULTATION	DATE OF DOCUMENT APPROVAL
Preparation of the Resource Implications & Financial Viability (Budget)		
University Students Fees Committee Approval of Budget		
Departmental & Faculty Approvals of Proposal		

Please note that approvals from the following internal committees is also required before the New Program Proposal can be sent to Quality Council & MTCU: *Graduate Council, University Planning Committee* **and** *Senate.*

APPENDIX A: CURRENT MPP/PROPOSED MPP-DSSL PROGRAM COMPARISON

	MPP-DSSL	MPP
TITLE	Executive Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies and Leadership	Master of Public Policy • In Digital Society • In Housing Policy
DURATION	12-months part time	12-months full time
START	Winter term (tentative)	Spring/Summer term
FORMAT	Blended learning, 3 6-day in person residencies (one per semester)	Online-first, no residency requirement
KEY SKILLS	-AI literacy -Cybersecurity - Public Consultation & Engagement* *Anticipated to update yearly based on topicality.	• Working with Code • Working with Data • Project Management • Product Management • General: effective communication, numeracy, logic
SEMINAR LIST	Term 1 1. Advanced policy for practitioners 2. Leading people, leading policy Term 2 1. Evolving policy for present & future tech 2. Putting research and data to work for policymakers Term 3 3. Navigating the tech economy 4. Digital Regulation in Canada	Term 1 1. Public policy making 2. Research methods for public policy 3. Architectures of digital Ecosystems Term 2 4. Law and public policy 5. Policy analysis 6. Digital transformation in the public sector Term 3 7. Digital governance 8. Market fundamentals 9. Capstone
TARGET AUDIENCE	Mid-career managers and supervisors, mature learners	New and recent graduates, early-career learners
NUMBER OF COURSES	• 6 3.0-unit seminars • 3 1.5-unit practitioner intensives	• 9 3-unit seminars • 9 1.5-unit skills labs
TOTAL UNITS	22.5	40.5
TARGET CLASS SIZE	Cap at 25	Currently 25+ Growing to 40+

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS'

REPORT ON PROPOSED MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY IN DIGITAL SOLUTIONS, STRATEGIES, AND LEADERSHIP

28 APRIL 2025

Reviewer 1

Name: Loleen Berdahl

University Address: Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy

                     University of Saskatchewan

                     101 Diefenbaker Place

                     Saskatoon, SK

                     S7N 5B8

Reviewer 2

Name: Harold Jansen

University Address: University of Lethbridge

                     4401 University Drive West

                     Lethbridge, Alberta

                     T1K 3M4

Internal Reviewer

Name: Terry Flynn

Department: Communication Studies & Media Arts

Outline of the Visit

Was the site visit: In person: ☐   Virtual site visit: ☒   Desk Review: ☐

If the review was conducted either virtually or via desk review, was this format agreed to by both external reviewers?   Yes   ☒   No   ☐

Was sufficient rationale provided by the Provost/Provost's delegate for an off-site visit?

Yes   ☒   No ☐

The review was conducted virtually and the following people were interviewed following this schedule. We found the people we interviewed to be friendly and candid.

April 16

Faculty/Group	Time
Dr. Steve Hranilovic, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies	10:00-10:30
Dr. Greg Flynn, Assistant Professor and MPP Academic Director	10:30-11:00
Faculty: Dr. Cliff van der Linden, Associate Professor Dr. Greg Flynn, Assistant Professor	11:15-11:45
Students: Existing students in the MPP Program (Emily, Joshua, Anthony, Tuca, and Eileen)	1:00-1:30
Program Administration: Vass Bednar, MPP Executive Director Laura Johnson, MPP Program Administrator	1:45 – 2:15

April 17

Faculty/Group	Time
Dr. Greg Flynn, MPP Academic Director	10:00-10:15
Dr. Jerry Hurley, Dean of Social Sciences	11:00-11:30
Dr. Melanie Heath, Graduate Associate Dean of Social Sciences	11:30-12:00
Dr. Matheus Grasselli, Deputy Provost	1:30-2:00
Dr. Greg Flynn, MPP Academic Director	2:15-2:30
Dr. Steve Hranilovic, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies	4:00

The proposal brief was thorough and mostly helpful. The part that was the least clear to us was how the curriculum will be delivered. Our interviewees repeatedly referred to the importance

of the intensive in-person week in justifying the relatively short duration of the program. We were unclear from the proposal whether the intensive week was the same as the skills lab, part of another course or courses, or whether it was a standalone course. We did not have that cleared up until our second interview with Greg Flynn on April 17. We also thought the market research section could have been more thorough to more clearly articulate how the program had ascertained demand for the program. Other than these two issues, the brief clearly articulated the curriculum and goals of the program.

The reviewers appreciated the online format; both external reviewers live in parts of Canada with relatively poor air service. The online format saved two days of travel. People showed up promptly for our visits and were cognizant of our time. The only suggestions for improvement involve the student and faculty parts of the review. Our discussion with the existing students in the MPP program could have been more productive if the students had had a chance to see the proposal for the new program. Only one had any familiarity with it and we had to explain the program to them. Given scheduling problems, two of the teaching faculty were unable to attend the Faculty portion of our meeting. As a result, our interviews were only with Dr. van der Linden, who is the Academic Director when not on leave, and Dr. Flynn, the Acting Academic Director. We would have found it helpful to hear from faculty not in administrative roles in the program.

PROGRAM

- Comment on if the program's objectives clearly described
- Comment on the appropriateness of the degree nomenclature, given the program's objectives
- Comment on the consistency of the program with McMaster's mission and academic plan; whether the program learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and aligned with the undergraduate or graduate Degree Level Expectations.
- McMaster's Current Priorities and Strategic Mandate Agreement should be at the forefront of program design. This information can be found in the links provided below:

  i. **McMaster's Strategic Mandate Agreement:**
     https://ira.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/11/McMaster-SMA3-Agreement-August-31-2020-SIGNED-FINAL.pdf

  ii. **McMaster's current priorities:**
      https://president.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2021/05/Institutional-Priorities-and-Strategic-Framework_FINAL_5May21.pdf

Comments:

The program has a clearly defined objective in equipping experienced policy practitioners for leadership in the complex challenges that come with the digital age. The six more specific program goals outlined in the brief flow naturally from that overarching goal and support it.

This program is called a Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies, and Leadership, which is an appropriate descriptor of the program, given its goals and target market. McMaster already offers two other MPP degrees, so this builds on that existing nomenclature.

The brief for the program maps the curriculum with the Master's Degree Level Expectations in a way that is clear and appropriate. We did not have any concerns about this.

We note that the Institutional Priorities and Strategic Framework timeline ended in 2024 and the Strategic Mandate Agreement expires shortly. Assuming the priorities outlined in these documents remain important, we find strong alignment. The SMA refers to alignment with labour market needs, a focus on experiential learning, and skills & competencies. This program would seem to align well with those concerns in that it identifies an emerging and urgent societal need and is designed to build on students' existing experience. McMaster's strategic priorities outline a strong focus on interdisciplinary and inter-faculty degree programs. This program draws on expertise and resources from Business and Engineering as well as from Social Sciences, and thus seems well aligned with this priority. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are another strong element of McMaster's strategic priorities. We didn't see this or Indigenization well addressed in the proposal and were largely limited to references around recruitment and program delivery rather than in the curriculum. Our discussions with Drs. van der Linden and Flynn about this satisfied us that there is the intention to weave this through the content of all parts of the program, as is currently done with the MPP. The proposal could be strengthened by addressing this more specifically.

Specific Recommendations (where applicable):

Recommendation 5: Ensure that all courses include consideration of ethics, decolonization, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.

ADMISSION & ENROLMENT
- Comment on whether the admission requirements (including any alternative requirements) are appropriately aligned with the program learning outcomes (and/or Degree Level Expectations) established for completion of the program.

- Are there any applicable alternative admission requirements, including how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience, and if so, are they appropriate?

Comments:

The admissions requirements for this proposed program of study, for both graduate work and recognizing the "executive" nature of the program are in line with requirements established in the DeGroote School of Business EMBA and part-time MBA programs as well as the Faculty of Humanities MCM program. The requirements recognize that the target audience isn't the typical, direct from undergraduate applicant; rather, the EMPP applicants will have a minimum of five years of direct work experience in addition to an undergraduate degree with a B+ average in program-related courses. The personal statement and letters of recommendation are also appropriate for this type of program. Further, interviews with the admissions committee will ensure that potential candidates understand the requirements of the program (residency and part-time studies) as well as the financial commitments necessary for successful completion.

The program has also designed an appropriate flexible/alternative admissions criteria aimed at candidates that may not meet the necessary grade point average in the typical admissions approval cycle. In this case, the program recognizes that significant, indirect work experience in the field of study may support the candidate's suitability for the program.

The proposal does not outline what that difference in work experience is and should be more explicit in understanding the suitability of candidates in this category of admissions are uniquely different from traditional applicants. The program does indicate that alternative admissions will require an additional letter of recommendation (total three) but the remainder of the requirements appear to be the same as the traditional candidates.

Specific Recommendations (where applicable):

Recommendation 1: The program should specifically outline the difference in admissions requirements between traditional and alternative candidates. In other executive graduate programs this is typically specified as significantly more years of direct or related work experience. In addition, a portfolio of the candidate's work may provide the admission committee with insights on the candidate's ability to meet the necessary graduate-level program outcomes.

STRUCTURE

- Comment on how the program's structure and regulations meet the specified program learning outcomes.

NOTE: The Quality Assurance Framework requires a clear distinction between program objectives, program-level learning outcomes, and Degree Level Expectations. See the Guidance on Program Objectives and Program-level Learning Outcomes for details on the distinction.

- Is the program's structure and the requirements to meet the program objectives and program-level learning outcomes appropriate?

- Do the program's structure, requirements and program-level learning outcomes ensure students meet the institution's Undergraduate or Graduate Degree Level Expectations?

- Does the (proposed) mode of delivery facilitate students' successful completion of the program-level learning outcomes?

- Does the curriculum address the current state of the discipline or area of study?

Comments:

The proposed program has been designed specifically for working professionals and will be offered in a part-time, blended delivery format. While the proposal itself does not detail the specific nature of blended delivery, the reviewers were able to gather sufficient information from the interviews to provide insights and recommendations.

Blended delivery, executive-level graduate programs have been offered at McMaster since 2007, specifically programs designed to incorporate an in-person, residency experience. The three programs have incorporated this pedagogical approach to learning include the EMBA, the part-time MBA and the MCM program. While the proposal under review states that it is a blended program, the details of this type of delivery are rather vague. Applicants to the program will want to understand, in specific details, how the in-person, synchronous and asynchronous elements combine to meet their own learning goals.

While the program anticipates that students in the program will complete the required courses within a stated period for completion (currently 12 months), it does not address those students that may need to only take one course a term or are unable to attend the in-person residencies.

Specific Recommendations (where applicable):

Recommendation 2 – Design a detailed schedule (in-person, synchronous, asynchronous) for potential applicants to understand how this program will be delivered so that they can anticipate and schedule the time and in-person commitments required by the program.

Recommendation 3: Allow students flexibility in program completion, with fast track (one year), regular track (one and a half year), and gradual track (two year) models. This will increase accessibility for mid-career professionals with competing time obligations. Ensure there is a

specific pathway for those who are unable to complete the program in the stated period of completion. To ensure fairness to students, assign tuition to individual courses rather than to academic semesters.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

- Comment on how the curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline or area of study; evidence of significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the program; the appropriateness and effectiveness of the modes of delivery at meeting program learning outcomes; and how teaching in the program prioritizes areas of accessibility and removes barriers to learning.

Comments:

We do not have any specific concerns about the curriculum as presented. The course content is somewhat general – and not in a bad way – and that makes them flexible and adaptable to a quickly evolving area. The program highlights the important concerns and considerations in the field.

We do think that some specific changes to the curriculum would be helpful. Consistent with the strategic priorities of McMaster University, we recommend that the proposal more clearly state that ethics, equity, diversity and inclusion, and anticolonial content are woven through the curriculum. Our conversations with those involved in the program satisfied us that they were; the proposal should state that.

We also believe that an initial intensive week (moved to the beginning of the program as described below) should be used to ensure that all students have a sufficient background in public policy and governance. We heard repeatedly the expectation that students in the program would have this through their professional experience. We also heard, however, an interest in recruiting students from areas like the fintech sector; we asked whether they were confident that those students would have the background in public policy needed to be successful in the program. We recommend that the first week be used to bring all students to a sufficient level to carry on through the rest of the program.

We also recommend the addition of a three-credit capstone project at the end of the program. This is a feature of the regular MPP and we believe it would be a worthwhile addition to this program that would also increase the program's intellectual rigour to be more consistent with other Masters degrees.

The mode of delivery for the program is blended. Most of the curriculum is to delivered asynchronously online, which is appropriate given the target market of working professionals.

The program as it currently stands incorporates an intensive week in each term. Although it was not clear from the proposal, our discussion with Dr. Flynn revealed that the current proposal is that in the middle of each of the three terms, students would gather together and do a seminar for one of their currently enrolled classes in the morning and another in the afternoon. Later in that week, students would complete one of the skill labs. This opportunity for networking and in person learning is an important feature of the program, something we heard repeatedly in our interviews.

We understand that accommodations would be included in the fees for the class, although presumably travel would be the responsibility of the participants. The expectation and hope is that employers would provide paid time off for employees to attend this week, but it is unclear whether there is market research to support that conclusion. This may be a barrier to some who might want to take the program: it may be that some employers will not provide the time off and potential students might be unwilling to use their vacation for this.

Our further concern with this model is what would happen were a student unable to attend the week due to a sudden change in circumstances, such as illness, a child or elder care emergency, or a work situation that prohibits leaving (such as a snap election call) – events that are more likely with the mid-career learner. This would jeopardize the student's ability to complete both courses and the skills lab, making it difficult to proceed through the program.

Given the importance of the intensive week to the program, we believe this presents a risk to program completion. We recommend restructuring the week and repositioning it to the beginning of each term to make it a three-credit course. Should a student be unable to complete the course due to unavoidable circumstances, they would then only be short 3 credits, rather than 7.5 credits as it currently stands. They could retake the course in the next cohort. We believe this reduces the risk for both students and for the program. It also would provide additional credit hours to a program that, as it stands, is a bit slim on credit hours.

We support the intention of an intensive week and believe the program is structured in a way that will be engaging for the students. With a change in scheduling of the intensive week, we believe that can be retained and introduce a degree of flexibility that would reduce the risk of students not completing the program.

Specific Recommendations (where applicable):

Recommendation 4: Increase the program's total credit units by having each residency plus the associated skills lab as a stand-alone three-credit course, rather than tied to other courses in the program. This will increase the program rigour. It will also reduce risk for students if they cannot attend a residency for personal reasons and must defer residency attendance for a year.

Recommendation 6: Schedule residencies in the first week of a semester or between semesters to facilitate student participation and to ensure student workloads are manageable.

Recommendation 7: Use the first program residency to ensure that all students have a strong foundation in public policy and public administration prior to starting other courses.

Recommendation 8: Add a three credit unit capstone course to the end of the program. This may be the final residency or a full semester course.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

- Comment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the proposed methods of assessment in demonstrating achievement of the program learning outcomes, as well as the extent to which the program(s) assess graduating student achievement of the program learning outcomes.

- Are the plans in place to monitor and assess the following, both appropriate and effective?

  i. The overall quality of the program;
  ii. Whether the program is achieving in practice its proposed objectives;
  iii. Whether its students are achieving the program-level learning outcomes; and
  iv. How the resulting information will be documented and subsequently used to inform continuous program improvement.

NOTE: Programs should ensure that the plans for monitoring and assessing student achievement provide an assessment of students currently enrolled as well as post-graduation metrics. Please see Guidance on Assessment of Teaching and Learning for further details and examples of measures for assessing teaching and learning that meet the requirements of the Quality Assurance Framework.

Comments:

The described assessments for the courses and skill labs are appropriate for public policy and public administration programs of this type. They reflect and will help to build the kinds of skills expected of people working in these fields. We have no concerns about any of the suggested assessments. The experience of the people in delivering the existing MPP will serve them well in this new program.

As outlined above, we recommend a capstone or an integrating final activity to pull together the experiences of the class and to invite students to demonstrate in a tangible way that they have achieved the program goals.

The proposal outlines a process for quality assurance monitoring. We further recommend that the program schedule a more formal review after two cohorts have gone through the program. This foray into executive-level graduate programming is new for the Faculty of Social Science. As we have discussed, the program is making some assumptions about student background and preparation that may or may not be borne out. Assessing whether the three intensive weeks are feasible for working professionals will also be important. When we queried the people we spoke to about some of these concerns, their answer was often that they would have to run the program to know for sure. That's a fair comment and we suggest that an early formal review be built into the plan for the program roll out, and adjustments be made based on the findings.

Specific Recommendations (where applicable):

Recommendation 9: Collect robust data to inform program refinement. After the completion of the first two cohorts, conduct a formal review of enrollment and program completion data, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, faculty and staff satisfaction, and other variables considered important to make programming, curriculum, and staffing adjustments as required.

RESOURCES TO MEET PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- Comment on evidence that there are adequate human, physical and financial resources to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students.

- Given the program's class sizes and cohorts as well as its program-level learning outcomes:
a) Is the number and quality of core faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise sufficient to achieve the goals of the program and foster the appropriate academic environment?

b) When adjunct/sessional faculty play a large role in the delivery of the program, is their role appropriate? Are plans in place to ensure the sustainability of the program and the quality of student experience and if so, are these suitable?

c) Is the provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities adequate, if applicable?

d) Taking into consideration implications for other existing programs at the university, is the administrative unit's planned use of existing human, physical and financial resources appropriate?

e) Are there adequate resources available to sustain the quality of scholarship and research activities produced by students, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access?

==NOTE: External Reviewers are not expected to assess the financial viability of a program, and internal budgets are not under the purview of the External Review of a New Program Proposal. Provide a general assessment of the administrative unit's planned use of existing financial resources.==

Comments:

Comments: The program will draw on faculty and external professional (adjunct) expertise. There appears to be sufficient teaching supports in place. The program does not require supervision. We do have concerns about the implications of the new program for staff support. Midcareer students can be 'high touch' students and maintaining appropriate staff support will be critical to program success. Additionally, the need for three residency programs creates significant logistical work that will need to managed successfully for a positive program experience. There is potential for a significant additional burden on the existing administrative staff and student support staff. This is something that must be monitored carefully and adjusted for immediately.

Specific Recommendations (where applicable):

QUALITY AND OTHER INDICATORS

- Please provide commentary on the indicators the department will use over the first five years to document and to demonstrate the quality of the program.

- Comment on the quality of the faculty (e.g., qualifications, funding, honours, awards, research, innovation and scholarly record, appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the program and commitment to student mentoring).

- Comment on any other evidence that the program and faculty will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

- Comment on any evidence of how faculty members will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION

Provide any commentary or recommendations on confidential areas.

Comments:

n/a

Specific Recommendations (where applicable):

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide a brief summary of the review. Please include commentary on any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed program together with recommendations on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to it, as applicable.

Recommendations that are clear, concise, and actionable are the most helpful for universities as they prepare to launch new programs. Include specific steps to be taken on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to the proposed program.

NOTE: The responsibility for arriving at a recommendation on the final classification of the program belongs to the Appraisal Committee. Individual reviewers are asked to refrain from making recommendations in this respect.

Although we have made a number of recommendations for improvement, we want to stress that we do think this program is an exciting addition to graduate-level public policy and public administration programs in Canada. It is unique and builds on McMaster's strengths in this area. It tackles a timely and quickly evolving area of digital transformation where public policy and governance approaches are struggling to keep up with the pace of technological change. It aligns with McMaster's strategic priorities. In that spirit, our recommendations seek to build on and improve this program.

Our main concern is that the course content as measured in credit hours is slim compared to other Masters programs, including the existing full-time Master of Public Policy program at McMaster. Indeed, in many other provinces, this would be a graduate certificate, rather than a degree. We encourage the addition of additional content or credit hours to the program; we have made a number of recommendations to that effect.

We also suggest some changes to the structure of the program to ensure that all students have the background to be successful in the program, an important consideration given the potentially heterogeneous backgrounds of the students. We also suggest restructuring the intensive weeks to make the program more flexible and to reduce the risk of students not completing the program due to life circumstances.

We appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to the program to improve its quality and potential for success.

Recommendation 1: The program should specifically outline the difference in admissions requirements between traditional and alternative candidates. In other executive graduate programs this is typically specified as significantly more years of direct or related work experience. In addition, a portfolio of the candidate's work may provide the admission

committee with insights on the candidate's ability to meet the necessary graduate-level program outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Design a detailed schedule (in-person, synchronous, asynchronous) for potential applicants to understand how this program will be delivered so that they can anticipate and schedule the time and in-person commitments required by the program.

Recommendation 3: Allow students flexibility in program completion, with fast track (one year), regular track (one and a half years), and gradual track (two years) models. This will increase accessibility for mid-career professionals with competing time obligations. Ensure there is a specific pathway for those who are unable to complete the program in the stated period of completion. To ensure fairness to students, assign tuition to individual courses rather than to academic semesters.

Recommendation 4: Increase the program's total credit units by having each residency plus the associated skills lab as a stand-alone three-credit course, rather than tied to other courses in the program. This will increase the program rigour. It will also reduce risk for students if they cannot attend a residency for personal reasons and must defer residency attendance for a year.
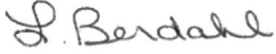
Recommendation 5: Ensure that all courses include consideration of ethics, decolonization, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Recommendation 6: Schedule residencies in the first week of a semester or between semesters to facilitate student participation and to ensure student workloads are manageable.

Recommendation 7: Use the first program residency to ensure that all students have a strong foundation in public policy and public administration prior to starting other courses.

Recommendation 8: Add a three-credit-unit capstone course to the end of the program. This may be the final residency or a full semester course.

Recommendation 9: Collect robust data to inform program refinement. After the completion of the first two cohorts, conduct a formal review of enrollment and program completion data, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, faculty and staff satisfaction, and other variables considered important to make programming, curriculum, and staffing adjustments as required.

Signature:

Signature:

Date: 28 April 2025

External Reviewer Report - Proposed MPP in Digital Strategies, Solutions and Leadership
Program Response

Program Response and Implementation Plan
Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review
Masters of Public Policy in Digital Strategies, Solutions and Leadership
Faculty of Social Sciences
McMaster University

Date of Review Report: April 28, 2025
Review Team Members:

<u>External:</u>
Loleen Berdahl
Executive Director, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy
Professor of Political Studies
University of Saskatchewan

Harold Jansen
Dean, School of Liberal Education
University Librarian
Professor of Political Science
University of Lethbridge

<u>Internal:</u>
Terry Flynn
Associate Professor
Department of Communication Studies and Media Arts
McMaster University

Recommendations and Responses

1. Program

The reviewers' report provides an overall positive assessment of both the proposed program and the need for it in today's broader educational and learning environment.

In particular, they found that the program was "an exciting addition to graduate-level public policy and public administration programs in Canada" and that it responds to "timely and quickly evolving area" and that it "identifies an emerging and urgent societal need."

They also found that it is both a unique program and builds on the existing strengths of the Master of Public Policy program, with its original focus on Digital Society.

The report does note the need to more specifically incorporate McMaster's strategic priorities concerning indigeneity, equity, diversity and inclusion into the program beyond references to recruitment and program delivery.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that all courses include consideration of ethics, decolonization, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The revised program proposal addresses this recommendation in section 4.1 – Program Content. In keeping with the explicit focus of the recommendation, the program commits that:

> Each course will also incorporate aspects of ethics, decolonization and equity, diversity and inclusion as key considerations within their relevant subject matter.

In addition, and as noted by the reviewers as being evident in their conversations with the Academic Directors (van der Linden – on leave; Flynn – acting), the focus on indigeneity, equity, diversion and inclusion is already an important element of the learning environment and is part of the core and spirt of the MPP and we anticipate that it will remain as such, if not overtly (and perhaps sufficiently) articulated.

2. ADMISSION & ENROLMENT

The reviewers found the admissions process consistent with McMaster's existing practices for executive level education and for expectations of this type of degree.

While the reviewers commended the addition of a consideration of students that do not meet the formal admission requirements of the program, but might otherwise be valuable additions, they found the criteria for admission to be less clear.

Recommendation 1: The program should specifically outline the difference in admissions requirements between traditional and alternative candidates. In other executive graduate

programs this is typically specified as significantly more years of direct or related work experience. In addition, a portfolio of the candidate's work may provide the admission committee with insights on the candidate's ability to meet the necessary graduate-level program outcomes.

The revised program proposal addresses this recommendation in section 2.3 – Alternative Requirements. The proposal adopts both recommendations of the reviewers through a clarification of the expected work experience, both in terms of amount of experience (five to seven years) and the level of work experience (managerial or director), as well as the need for a recent portfolio of work.

3. STRUCTURE

While the reviewers found the structure of the program consistent with McMaster's existing executive level education programs, they highlighted the potential for students at this level may have work and life constraints that may prevent the completion of the degree within a single calendar year. Their report suggested both a need for greater clarification around schedule expectations for working professionals as well as the need for greater program completion flexibility.

Recommendation 2 – Design a detailed schedule (in-person, synchronous, asynchronous) for potential applicants to understand how this program will be delivered so that they can anticipate and schedule the time and in-person commitments required by the program.

Recommendation 3: Allow students flexibility in program completion, with fast track (one year), regular track (one and a half year), and gradual track (two year) models. This will increase accessibility for mid-career professionals with competing time obligations. Ensure there is a specific pathway for those who are unable to complete the program in the stated period of completion. To ensure fairness to students, assign tuition to individual courses rather than to academic semesters.

In keeping with recommendation three, two timelines have been included in the revised program proposal and thereby creating different options for speed of completion:

Fast track	12 months
Gradual track	24 months

Given the need to align courses with specific semesters and an inability to offer all of the courses at any one time, an eighteen month (Regular) option was not feasible.

A specific taking of course schedule for students selecting the second option has been included in section 4.1 – Program Content.

The need for a more specific class schedule in either of the two tracks is noted and will be worked once the program is approved and staffed with faculty members who will be able to determine the time requirements of students in each course in relation to the mix between synchronous and asynchronous

course delivery. This schedule will be developed early in the post-approval process and be disclosed to potential students during the recruitment process.

A change to the manner in which tuition is assigned is noted and the recommendation is fully accepted as a necessary aspect of offering a two-option model. This change, however, may also have implications for the existing (and potentially future) MPP program offerings and will require additional input by the Faculty and University administration. Consideration will be given to both a per course model as well as a reduced tuition model for the gradual track option.

4. CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

The reviewers found both the course content and the methods of teaching to be appropriate for both the discipline and the practices at McMaster. However, the most significant reservation expressed by the reviewers in their report overall was in relation to the overall number of required course hours to complete the program. This is reflected in both the substantive portion of their report and in a specific recommendation:

Recommendation 4: Increase the program's total credit units by having each residency plus the associated skills lab as a stand-alone three-credit course, rather than tied to other courses in the program. This will increase the program rigour. It will also reduce risk for students if they cannot attend a residency for personal reasons and must defer residency attendance for a year.

In response to this concern, we have increased the overall number of units that students will need to complete the program. In keeping with the recommendation, the intensive residency courses are now designed as stand-alone three-credit courses and will occur at different times in each of the three semesters.

The policy skills labs will be shifted out of the intensive residency weeks and will remain at 1.5 units to reflect the workload challenges as identified by the reviewers.

The reviewers also highlighted that the timing of the intensive/residency-based courses may prove problematic for busy employed persons.

Recommendation 6: Schedule residencies in the first week of a semester or between semesters to facilitate student participation and to ensure student workloads are manageable.

We recognize the wisdom of the suggestion but also feel that pedagogical and quality of experience factors also warrant consideration. As such, we have adopted a revised Intensive/Residency courses schedule as follows:

- Term 1 – First week of Semester
- Term 2/5 – Middle of Semester
- Term 3/6 – Final week of Semester

The second intensive/residency course will be taken at the option of the student in the gradual-track option in either the first or second year of the program.

The scheduling of the first intensive/residency course is in keeping with the reviewers' suggestion and recommendation seven below. It will permit a foundational course in public policy to be taught to all students to ensure a baseline learning environment while also providing strong introduction and networking opportunities for the student cohort in keeping with the experiences aspect identified as a key aspect by our stakeholders.

The second intensive/residency week is scheduled mid-semester to again provide strong networking and experience opportunities. It will also stand as a key opportunity for students to consider and organize their summative capstone project to be delivered at the end of the program and as part of the third and final intensive/residency course.

The final intensive/residency course is a summative experience that will occur at the end of the final semester. It will enable students to build on the entirety of their learning experiences and knowledge throughout the program in the delivery of a summative group project to be completed over the span of a single week.

The reviewers also suggested some course content specific recommendations that they felt would be beneficial to the program:

Recommendation 7: Use the first program residency to ensure that all students have a strong foundation in public policy and public administration prior to starting other courses.

We have established a new course as part of the revised program proposal - Foundations of Democratic Governance and Public Policy. This course will serve as the foundational course in public policy to ensure that all students have sufficient baseline understanding of the concepts and theories to be discussed throughout the program. It will be offered as the first Intensive/Residency course and delivered in the first week of the program.

A course description is set out in section 4.1 of the revised program proposal.

Recommendation 8: Add a three-credit-unit capstone course to the end of the program. This may be the final residency or a full semester course.

We have established a new course as part of the revised program proposal - Policy Design and Delivery – Capstone Project. This course will serve as a summative course that will permit students to draw together the knowledge and skills that they have learned throughout the program. It will be offered as the third and final Intensive/Residency course and during the final week of the program in year 3 or 6, depending on the fast or gradual track option selected by the student.

A Course description is set out in section 4.1 of the revised program proposal.

5. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

The reviewers found that the methods of assessment were appropriate and in keeping with both McMaster and the disciplines' expectations.

While they noted that the program proposal has built in quality assurance processes, the reviewers felt that an earlier review process would help ensure strong student experiences and that feedback was quickly incorporated into the program design and delivery, given the newness of it to the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Recommendation 9: Collect robust data to inform program refinement. After the completion of the first two cohorts, conduct a formal review of enrollment and program completion data, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, faculty and staff satisfaction, and other variables considered important to make programming, curriculum, and staffing adjustments as required.

This recommendation is both well understood and anticipated by the program. To ensure consistency with the recommendation, the program will incorporate the expedited review into the job description of the Executive Director of the program and include it as a performance assessment measure of the Academic Director to be reviewed by the Dean of Social Sciences as part of the Annual Performance Review.

The commitment to the two year review is also reflected in the revised program proposal in section 5.

6. RESOURCES – Graduate programs

The reviewers did not make any recommendations with respect to resources to deliver the program, finding that there appear to be sufficient resources in place.

The reviewers did express some concern with workload levels for existing staffing levels. This is concern is noted and will be addressed as the program becomes approved with additional administrative resources already under consideration.

7. QUALITY AND OTHER INDICATORS

The reviewers did not provide any comments under this section.

8. CONFIDENTIAL SECTION

The reviewers did not provide any comments under this section.

9. Summary and Implementation Plan

	Recommendation	Proposed Follow Up	Responsibility for Follow Up	Timeline
1.	*: The program should specifically outline the difference in admissions requirements between traditional and alternative candidates. In other executive graduate programs this is typically specified as significantly more years of direct or related work experience. In addition, a portfolio of the candidate's work may provide the admission committee with insights on the candidate's ability to meet the necessary graduate-level program outcomes.	Inclusion of specific work experience, both length of time and level of employment, in program proposal. Inclusion of portfolio in required admissions documentation in program proposal.	Academic Director Academic Director	Completed Completed
2.	Design a detailed schedule (in-person, synchronous, asynchronous) for potential applicants to understand how this program will be delivered so that they can anticipate and schedule the time and in-person commitments required by the program.	Drafting of detailed class schedule detailing time commitments for potential students. Detailed schedule for taking of classes for both options included in program proposal.	Executive Director Academic Director	January 2026 or post-approval of program. Completed
3	Allow students flexibility in program completion, with fast track (one year), regular track (one and a half years), and gradual track (two years) models. This will increase accessibility for mid-career professionals with competing	Fast-track and gradual track options created and included in program proposal.	Academic Director	Completed

	time obligations. Ensure there is a specific pathway for those who are unable to complete the program in the stated period of completion. To ensure fairness to students, assign tuition to individual courses rather than to academic semesters.	Recommendation accepted, but consideration of impact on existing MPP programs needed.	Academic Director	September 2025
4.	Increase the program's total credit units by having each residency plus the associated skills lab as a stand-alone three-credit course, rather than tied to other courses in the program. This will increase the program rigour. It will also reduce risk for students if they cannot attend a residency for personal reasons and must defer residency attendance for a year.	Create three stand alone three-unit intensive residency courses as part of the program, as detailed in the program proposal under section 4.1. Policy skills labs remaining at 1.5 units, but removed from intensive/residency courses.	Academic Director Academic Director	Completed Completed
5.	Ensure that all courses include consideration of ethics, decolonization, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.	Statement of intention included in program proposal. Requirement for Faculty to include considerations in course content.	Academic Director Academic Director	Completed Ongoing with staffing of program courses following approval of program.
6.	Schedule residencies in the first week of a semester or between semesters to facilitate student participation and to ensure student workloads are	Scheduling of the first and third intensive/residency courses have been moved to beginning and end	Academic Director	Completed

	of semester. Second intensive/residency remaining in middle of second/fifth semester. Scheduling changes determined in manner to reflect pedagogical and class experience purposes. Changes have been included in the program proposal.		
7.	Use the first program residency to ensure that all students have a strong foundation in public policy and public administration prior to starting other courses.	Create a foundational course in public policy and offer it as the first intensive/residency course at the outset of the program. Included in the program proposal at section 4.1.	Academic Director	Completed
8.	Add a three-credit-unit capstone course to the end of the program. This may be the final residency or a full semester course.	Create a capstone course and offer it as the final intensive/residency course. Included in the program proposal at section 4.1.	Academic Director	Completed
9.	Collect robust data to inform program refinement. After the completion of the first two cohorts, conduct a formal review of enrollment and program completion data, student satisfaction, employer	Recommendation Accepted. Data will be collected throughout the whole of the program from	Academic Director Executive Director Associate Dean of Social Sciences –	Post-Approval through to end of year 2 and ongoing.

manageable.

| | satisfaction, faculty and staff satisfaction, and other variables considered important to make programming, curriculum, and staffing adjustments as required. | recruitment in year 1 post-approval through to the end of year 2 and ongoing.

Executive Director and Academic Director will be assessed on various performance measures as part of annual review. | Graduate Studies

Dean of Social Sciences

School of Graduate Studies | |

McMaster University

From: Jeremiah Hurley, Dean, and Melanie Heath, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences

Re: IQAP review Proposed Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies, and Leadership

Date: May 23, 2025

The IQAP review team consisting of external members Dr. Loleen Berdahl (University of Saskatchewan) and Dr. Harold Jansen (University of Lethbridge), and internal member Dr. Terry Flynn (Department of Biology), conducted its review of the proposed Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies, and Leadership (MPP-DSSL) program in on April 16 – 17, 2025. We thank the reviewers for their review and recommendations regarding the proposed Master of Public Policy in Digital Solutions, Strategies, and Leadership. The recommendations will be helpful to both the department, the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the University in the coming years as we launch this important, innovative program. Herein we provide our response to the report.

The reviewers' overall assessment of the proposed MPP-DSSL is positive. They emphasize the clear objectives of the program that will provide policy practitioners needed skills to deal with the complex challenges of the digital age. They note that the MPP-DSSL appropriately builds on McMaster's strengths in graduate-level public policy and administration, and that the program will fill an important gap in creating professional leaders to deal with the fast pace of technological change and digital transformation.

We are grateful for these insightful recommendations that will help ensure the new program's success while meeting the needs of working professionals who seek a blended delivery, executive-level graduate program. The Program response outlines specific ways in which it will act on these recommendations over the coming implementation period and into the initial years of the Program. Below we offer some comments on the major recommendations and on the Program's response to them.

1. Program

Reviewers wanted to ensure that all courses include consideration of ethics, decolonization,

and equity, diversity, and inclusion (#5). The Program response revised the proposal to note that every course offered in the program will incorporate these important concerns that are a key element of McMaster's strategic priorities.

We also note that the Faculty of Social Sciences has appointed a new Director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenous Strategies who is working with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies to implement strategies for ensuring learning environments that attend to decolonization, equity, diversity, inclusion, and indigeneity. More broadly in the University, unconscious bias training is a central element of McMaster's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy, and it is now required of members of selection, CPM, T&P and similar committees. This mandate can apply to the MPP-DSSL admissions committee. As part of its own EDI strategy, the Faculty plans to review its graduate admission processes to ensure unbiased, fair assessment of candidate applications and offers of financial support. As a Faculty, we are fully committed to fostering EDI and Indigenous Strategies in our graduate programs.

2. Admissions and Enrolment

The reviewers ask for more explicit specifications of admission requirements for non-traditional candidates who may not meet the minimum grade point average. The Program has responded that it will adopt the recommendation of the reviewers by enumerating the requirements for these non-traditional candidates in terms of amount of experience (five to seven years) and the level of work experience (managerial or director). In addition, there will be a requirement of a recent portfolio of work. We note that these specifications will be made part of the recruitment materials to ensure that the Program is attracting a range of professionals who have strong backgrounds in management and/or administration but don't necessarily fit the traditional model of admission requirements. With these parameters in mind, decisions about non-traditional candidates will be made on a case-by-case basis and will consider EDI and Indigeneity as outlined in response 1 above. Interviews with the admissions committee will be important to EDI values and ensuring that students understand the requirements of the program.

3. Structure

The reviewers set out two recommendations regarding the structure of the program. First, they asked for a detailed schedule for potential applicants to assess the program requirements (#2). Given the fact that the Program will be attracting working professionals, it is important to provide them with as much information as possible, and the Faculty will work with the Program to develop such a schedule to provide to students in the recruitment process.

Recommendation #3 offers very important guidance when considering the match of the Program requirements with the busy lives of working professionals. They recommend creating three tracks to complete the program. Given the fact that courses need to align with specific semesters, we decided to incorporate this recommendation into the proposal by offering a fast track of 12 months and a gradual track of 24 months. The Faculty will work with the School of

Graduate Studies to ensure that students can choose either track at the beginning of their studies, and that students are also offered the flexibility to move into the gradual track, if they began in the fast track and find this unsustainable. The reviewers also recommend assigning tuition to individual courses rather than to academic semesters to ensure fairness in completing their degree. The Faculty will support the new Program in deciding the best way to move forward, whether with a per course model as some other executive programs offer, or with a reduced tuition model. The key will be to ensure that students in each track are treated fairly.

4.   Curriculum and Teaching

The reviewers make four excellent recommendations related to curriculum and teaching. Regarding recommendation #4, we agree that it is important to prioritize the Program's rigor, and we support the decision to increase the number of units that students need to complete the Program, in line with the reviewers' recommendation. Making the proposed three intensive residencies into stand-alone, three-credit courses will ensure that the work accomplished during each of these weeks is taken seriously and recognized as a milestone for completion of the degree. Additionally, moving the policy skills labs outside the residency to stand alone will also increase the rigor of the program.

The reviewers further suggest scheduling the residencies in the first week of the semester or between semesters to make the student workload more manageable (#6). We agree that it is important to consider the busy schedules of the students, but at the same time there are pedagogical reasons to offer the intensive residencies in a staggered manner (first week of term 1; middle of semester of term 2or 5, and final week of semester of term 3/6), with each providing content that builds towards the next intensive residency. By moving the first intensive residency to the beginning of term one, the Program addresses recommendation #7 that suggests using the first intensive residency to ensure a strong foundation in public policy and administration. This first intensive week will allow students to get to know one another, and to learn the foundations of the Program that can then guide the synchronous and asynchronous content. Finally, having an intensive residency at the end of the program addresses recommendation #8 that advises providing a three-credit capstone course to ensure a complete experience for the learner. This new course will take place during the last week of the program as the third intensive residency and will offer a capstone project to provide students a summation of the skills they have learned throughout the Program.

5.   Assessment of Learning

We thank the reviewers for the recommendation (#9) regarding the need to collect robust data to inform program refinement. The Faculty will support the Program in gathering this data to assess program quality and success.

To   :   Graduate Council

From   :   Christina Bryce
                     Assistant Graduate Secretary

_____

At its meeting on May 14th the Faculty of Health Sciences Graduate Policy and Curriculum Committee approved the following graduate curriculum recommendations.

Please note that this recommendation was submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences.

- o **For Information of Graduate Council:**

  - o **Health Research Methodology**
    - **New Course**
      a. 768 Qualitative Data Generation

McMaster University | SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Gilmour Hall, Room 212
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L8

(905) 525-9140 x 23679
gs.mcmaster.ca

To   :   Graduate Council

From   :   Christina Bryce
               Assistant Graduate Secretary

_____

At it's meeting on February 14th the Faculty of Science Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee approved the following recommendations.

Please note that these recommendations were approved by the Faculty of Science.

For Information of Graduate Council:

- **a. Chemical Biology***
  - **i. New Courses**
    1. 6OA3 Natural Products
    2. 6OB3 Medicinal Chemistry: Drug Design and Development

***also approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences**

June 2025 Graduate Council

New Awards – For Approval

Award Name: The SPUR Graduate Award for Quantum Computing and AI

Terms:
Established in 2025 by The SPUR Innovation Centre. To be awarded by the School of Graduate Studies, on the recommendation of the Faculty of Engineering to Masters or PhD students enrolled in the Faculty of Engineering who demonstrate academic and research excellence. Preference will be given to students whose research is in the field of quantum computing or artificial intelligence.

Award Name: The HCAT Civil/Geotechnical Engineering Graduate Scholarship

Terms:
Established in 2025 by The Heavy Construction Association of Toronto (HCAT). To be awarded by the School of Graduate Studies, on the recommendation of the Department of Civil Engineering, to a graduate student in Civil Engineering who demonstrates academic and research excellence in geotechnical engineering and/or the heavy construction industry.