

Policy Planning and Program Evaluation

Description of the course

Although many traditional courses and seminars are entitled “Introduction to Public Policy” or “Public Policy Analysis,” this course is called “Introduction to Policy Planning and Program Evaluation.” This title signals that this course will cover both the central role of planning in municipal decision-making, as well as implementation of programs, and evaluation of both policies and programs. Program evaluation is of increasing importance because a municipality must assess existing programs before it can reorient them to serve new policy or long-term plans, or eliminate them to free up resources and reallocate them towards new or alternative objectives.

Municipal government is widely regarded as the order of government closest to the people, and it provides an increasingly broad range of public goods and services to municipal residents. Over the past 20 years, the federal government and several of the provincial governments have retreated from certain policy areas, such as housing, culture, recreation, parks, and so on, and public pressures has led local governments to move into, or expand their activities in these areas. In this new environment, municipal councils and their professional staffs are decision-makers about the services to be delivered.

The planning paradigm has two basic components. The first component is the preparation of plans to address existing issues and problems. Farsighted administrators and councillors will also plan in anticipation of future problems, either to prevent their occurrence or minimize their impacts – this is the second component.

Learning Objectives

- Outline different definitions of public policy and learn a working definition of the term that applies to the municipal context
- Differentiate between the political and administrative roles in policy planning and program evaluation
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of how goals, objectives, instruments and evaluation relate to the policy planning process
- Describe the government institutions - federal, provincial and local - that provide the context within which local government policy is planned and approved
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of how provincial legislation controls local government policy
- Identify and describe the policy communities and actors who participate in the policy process and affect policy outcomes
- Identify and briefly describe the steps in the policy process for the basic policy cycle

- Explain various approaches to strategic planning and how each approach may be useful in setting policy priorities in local government
- Demonstrate how problems and issues evolve on the local government agenda
- Describe the relationship between what is referred to as priority setting and policy agenda setting in local government
- Describe the importance of the role of goals in the policy process
- Demonstrate an understanding of the generic format of policy documents that will aid council's decisions
- Outline a range of decision models that will assist in understanding policy decision processes
- Explain the political nature of council policy decisions
- Outline the range of tools available for policy implementation
- Describe the types of problems that may arise during policy implementation
- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the municipal budget and link the municipal budget to the policy process
- Outline the rationale for and importance of program evaluation
- Explain the principles and types of program evaluation
- Describe the problems encountered in undertaking program evaluation
- Outline the connection between the municipal budget process and the policy evaluation process

Course Outline

Module 1 presents an introductory discussion of general concepts that are important in policy planning and program evaluation. It will define public policy, distinguish between policies, programs and projects, and discuss the determinants of local government policy. It will introduce the place of goals, policy instruments and evaluation, and cover the question of politics versus administration.

Module 2 will outline the institutions at the three orders of government in which policy development takes place. It will begin by discussing the policy process in the federal and provincial orders, primarily to draw contrasts with the municipal order of government. The following section will outline the legislative basis upon which municipal policy development takes place. This section will focus on the structure of provincial enabling legislation and refers also to the effects of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* on policy development. In the next section the policy communities and actors in the municipal policy process will be discussed. These communities and actors must be understood in terms of their motivations and roles in municipal policy development.

Module 3 will discuss planning, prioritizing and agenda setting, but the module could easily be subtitled, "How things should work". We know that planning, priority setting, and agenda setting should be carried out, but not necessarily how to do these things. This module advocates best practices. Because reality often falls short of the ideal, a central purpose of the module is to provide administrators and politicians with tools to keep or get their municipalities on track.

Module 4 focuses on the formulation and adoption of policy and programs. These two stages of the policy process are closely connected; once policy options have been formulated, they must be approved in the political arena. During the approval process, the options may be modified because council has made improvements or because the political process has led to a compromise.

Compromise can lead to sub-optimal outcomes, or it can inject life into a technical proposal; this is the nature of the political process.

Module 5 focuses on policy and program implementation, the process through which the municipality attempts to achieve its policy goals. It is essential for municipal staff to have a working knowledge of the instruments of policy implementation, and this module will discuss various policy instruments, or policy tools, that may be used.

Module 6 covers policy evaluation which is a logical and reasonable conclusion to the policy process. Once a government goes through all the necessary steps in the policy process to adopt a policy and allocates resources to implement that policy, it is reasonable to expect that there would be great interest in assessing if the policy or program actually worked. Did it address the problem that was defined? Did it meet the goals that were identified to address the problem?

Required Readings

Textbook

Leslie Pal, *Beyond Policy Analysis: Public Issue Management in Turbulent Times* 5th edition (Scarborough, ON: Thomson Nelson, 2006).

Additional Required Readings

Fowler, Edmund and David Siegel, *Urban Policy Issues*, 2nd edition, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002, Chapter 1, “Urban Public Policy at the Turn of the Century”.

Tindal, C. Richard, *You and Your Local Government*, Toronto: Ontario Municipal Management Institute, 2001, Chapter 5, “Who are the Key Players?”.

Hoehn, Felix, *Municipalities and Canadian Law: Defining the Authority of Local Governments*, Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1996, Chapter 10.

Tindal, C. Richard and Susan Nobes Tindal, *Local Government in Canada*, 5th edition, Toronto: Nelson Thomson Learning, 2000, Chapter 9.

Bryson, John M., *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995, Chapter 2.

Snowden, David F and Boone, Mary E. A Leader’s Framework for Decision Making. Harvard Business Review, November 2007.

Graded Assignments

Discussion Boards:

Grade Value: 5%

Students are required to participate in all 6 online discussions. Each online discussion will consist of an initial posting on the discussion topic and response postings (comments) either in response to a classmate's posting or as an augmentation of your initial posting. Students will have approximately one week to meet the requirements of each discussion board. Focused online discussions allow students to express their understanding of information that is covered in each of the modules, to discuss that information with classmates and their instructor, and to integrate the results of those discussions into their own learning.

Essay 1:

Grade Value: 15%

Requirements: 1000 – 1200 words, 12 pt font, double-spaced.

Essay 2:

Grade Value: 20%

Requirements: 1000 – 1200 words, 12 pt font, double-spaced.

Final Assignment:

The final assignment is cumulative. Students are given one week to complete the assignment.

Grade Value: 35%

Evaluation Criteria

Essays

Essays in all courses are evaluated according to the following criteria:

Thesis (Grade Weight = 20%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">thesis is clearly stated, creative, original and insightfulpresents a Point of View (POV) based on a critical analysis of factual evidence and relevant theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">thesis is clearly stated and insightfulpresents a POV based on an assessment of factual evidence and may refer to relevant theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">thesis is lacking in clarity and precisionpresents a POV based on a limited assessment of factual evidence and on common knowledge, generalizations and some theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">thesis is poorly stated, ambiguous or absentfails to present a POV or presents a POV that is not based on analysis of factual evidence relevant theory or any other viable form of support

Background and Course Content (Grade Weight = 20%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elaboration of the thesis is concise, focused explicitly situated (relevant to the community of learners and practitioners), contextualized (related to real life scenarios for practitioners) and draws on the student’s personal experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elaboration of the thesis is clear and somewhat situated and contextualized the essay contains some background information that is not central to the thesis so the focus on the thesis sometimes waivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elaboration of the thesis is somewhat clear, but too much time is given to contextualizing and situating the thesis the extra emphasis on the background and context tends to draw the focus of the essay away from the central thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the thesis is neither situated nor contextualized in terms of practical professional experiences and/or situations focus on the thesis is poor or absent

Research, Supporting Data and Analysis (Grade Weight = 25%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates a clear grasp of the complexity of the issues arising from the thesis refers to a full range of relevant current resources (course materials, external sources), and contemporary research findings uses relevant data, analyses and conclusions to conduct a thoroughly and objective examination of the validity of the thesis includes a critical analysis of the sources used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates an understanding of the central issues arising from the thesis refers to current sources, including contemporary research findings draws on related analyses and conclusions that support the thesis uses a somewhat uncritical analysis of this information to examine the validity of the thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates an appreciation for some of the issues arising from the thesis refers to current sources, research, opinions, and observations that support the thesis the resources, evidence, and analyses used are somewhat limited in scope information is used in an uncritical way to examine the validity of the thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to indicate an appreciation or understanding of issues that arise from the thesis makes limited or no reference to current sources, contemporary research or other forms of factual evidence, opinions or analyses to support the thesis does not use the information that is presented to assess the validity of the thesis

Conclusions (Grade Weight = 15%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conclusions are clear, creative and insightful contain a clear, cogent reiteration of and support for the central points of the thesis thorough careful analysis confirms the superiority of this POV over other POVs. the conclusions are based on arguments that are developed throughout the essay and offer a convincing defense of thesis and a compelling, insightful closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conclusions are clear and valid contain a cogent reiteration of the central points of the thesis a careful analysis tends to support the superiority of this POV over a competing POV the conclusions support the main hypothesis of the essay and provide a convincing sense of closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conclusions are offered but in a disorganized way the central points of the thesis are reiterated analysis supports the thesis but little consideration is given to other POVs. the thesis defense is somewhat successful but there is only a limited sense of closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conclusions are vague or absent there is little or no reiteration of the central points of the thesis analysis is weak and offers limited support for the thesis and does not consider alternative POVs fails to defend the thesis adequately and provides no sense of closure

Writing Style and Essay Structure (Grade Weight = 10%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essay is very well organized central ideas are presented very clearly, cogently and effectively thesis is insightful and creative and functions as a unifying factor throughout the paper there is a critical analysis and integration of ideas throughout the paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essay is well organized central ideas are presented clearly, and effectively thesis is sound and imaginative and is referred back to frequently throughout the paper paper is analytical and relationships between ideas are clearly developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some parts of the essay are less well organized central ideas are fairly clear, but could be presented more effectively and consistently thesis is generally sound but utilized inconsistently as a unifying factor in the paper paper presents some analysis and integration of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essay lacks organization central ideas are unclear and poorly presented thesis is unclear and lacking in insight, creativity and soundness paper is neither analytical nor integrative

Grammar and Mechanics (Grade Weight = 10%)

Excellent (A: 86–100)	Good (B: 72–85)	Satisfactory (C: 60–71)	Poor (D–F: 0–59)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all sources are cited accurately minimal spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors essay submitted on time (or delayed, with instructor permission) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most sources are cited correctly a few spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors essay submitted late (marks deducted at instructor's discretion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some sources are cited incorrectly or inappropriately some spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors essay submitted late (marks deducted at instructors discretion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sources not cited or cited incorrectly or inappropriately excessive spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors essay submitted very late

Thesis	(Grade Weight = 20%)
Background and Course Content	(Grade Weight = 20%)
Research, Supporting Data and Analysis	(Grade Weight = 25%)
Conclusions	(Grade Weight = 15%)
Writing Style and Essay Structure	(Grade Weight = 10%)
Grammar and Mechanics	(Grade Weight = 10%)

Discussion Boards

Discussion Postings (includes initial and response postings) in all courses are evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Demonstrates an understanding of a course concept. This applies to your initial and response posts, and includes the following elements:

- Are your posts relevant to the assigned topic and question?
- Do your posts demonstrate accurate understanding of course material?
- Does the subject field convey the essence of your post (in less than 10 words)?

Important Note for Quality Posts: While your posts will often draw on past experiences and informed opinions, the most successful posts will support personal opinions with reference to the course material.

2. Advances the discussion by adding new knowledge. This applies to your response posts, in which you should try to broaden the perspective presented in another post by building on their ideas or pushing those ideas in a new direction. Some possible ways to do this are:

- Apply references to course material/theoretical concepts.
- Provide a comparable example from your own work experience thereby extending the original idea, but with a new 'twist'.
- Provide a counter-example based on personal experiences that refute or weaken the position taken by the initial author (e.g. I hear you say this..., but my experience suggests this...)
- Apply a related concept from the course that the initial post did not refer to.
- Apply a related example from current events or some other resource.

Basic Requirements for Course Assignments

File Types: assignments must be submitted on the Course Site in MS Word .doc, .docx, or in .rft format. (These file types can be opened in Blackboard Learn and receive comments; other formats such as .wpd cannot).

All assignments should be in 12 Times New Roman (TNR) font, double-spaced with a 1” margin on each side. Each assignment should be approximately 10 pages in length.

Each page should include the student’s name and page numbers in the header or footer.

Each assignment should have a cover sheet as part of the document that has the following: course name, student’s full name, instructor’s name and essay title (ie. Essay Assignment #1).

Software and Technology Requirements

This course will use Blackboard Learn S-14 (BBLearn) learning management system for class communications, content distribution, and assessments.

Log on to www.dal.ca/bblearn

To access the course:

Username: Your College of Continuing Education username cXXXX.cce

Initial Password: Your College of Continuing Education password (it is recommended that you change this password and keep it in a safe place as we are unable to reset it at the College).

For this course, you will need a reliable and frequent access to a computer and to the Internet. You might also need a headset with a microphone or speakers and a microphone to be able to listen to online resources and conduct other activities in the course (not needed in all courses).

Blackboard supports the most common operating systems:

PC: Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista

Mac: Mac OS X Mavericks

Note: computers using Windows XP, Windows 8 RT and OS X 10.6 or lower are no longer supported. Also please ensure that you have the most recent Adobe program downloaded to be able to access certain types of files on Blackboard.

To check browser and computer compatibility follow the link that can be found on the course site under ‘Student Supports’:

https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_14/Administrator/030_Browser_Support/010_Browser_Support_SP14

Technology issues are not an excuse for missing a course requirement – make sure your computer is configured correctly and address issues well in advance of deadlines.

Help Desk Information

For technology or computer issues, you should contact the Help Desk at Dalhousie University.

Phone: 902-494-2376

Toll-free: 1-800-869-3931

Email: helpdesk@dal.ca

Operating Hours

Fall & Winter Hours

08:00am - 12:00am Monday - Friday

10:00am - 12:00am Saturday - Sunday

Summer Hours (May – Aug)

08:00am - 09:00pm Monday - Friday

08:00am - 06:00pm Friday

10:00am - 06:00pm Saturday – Sunday

You will find tutorials online under ‘Student Supports’ that will familiarize you with various aspects of BbLearn.

For issues related to course content and requirements, please contact your instructor.

Student-Instructor Interaction

Instructors are committed to providing a learning experience through thoughtful planning, implementation and assessment of course activities. They are committed to being readily available to students throughout the course by:

1. Replying to emails within 24-48 hours.
2. Returning graded course work with feedback within 7-10 days of each assignment due date.

Blackboard and Privacy

While connected to Dalhousie University’s Learning Management System (Blackboard), students may be tracked for their use of the features and tools. For the life of the online course/program, all administrators and instructors with access to the course can request full or partial reports of tracked data for any student(s). Instructors may use tracked information to help determine grades—specifically date stamps on discussion postings and assignment file uploads are used to determine if activities were completed by a specific deadline, and to calculate late penalties if applicable.

Aggregate class and data is used by administrators to study usability, access, and pedagogical issues in the online learning environment.

Blackboard tracks each student’s use of all course tools and features, including:

- entry time into each tool and feature
- exit time from each tool and feature
- time spent in each tool and feature per session
- time spent in each tool and feature during the entire course
- total time in Blackboard
- number of Blackboard sessions
- discussion messages read
- discussion messages posted
- mail messages read

- mail messages sent
- calendar entries viewed
- calendar entries added
- assignments read
- assignments submitted
- content files viewed
- web links viewed
- media Library collections viewed
- media Library entries viewed

Academic Integrity

The commitment of the College of Continuing Education is to graduate future leaders of business, government and society who manage and lead with integrity. So when you submit any work for evaluation in this course or any other, please ensure that you are familiar with your obligations under Dalhousie University's Academic Integrity Policies. Dalhousie offers many ways to learn about academic writing and presentations; so that all members of the University community may acknowledge the intellectual property of others. Knowing how to find, evaluate, select, synthesize and cite information for use in assignments is called being "information literate." Information literacy is taught by Dalhousie University Librarians in classes and through online tutorials. See guides and tutorials at http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity/student-resources.html

Do not plagiarize any materials for this course. Further guidance on what constitutes plagiarism, how to avoid it, and proper methods for attributing sources, *please see* <http://plagiarism.dal.ca/Student%20Resources/>

Furthermore, the University's Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer readable format, and to submit any paper to a check such as that performed by Safe Assign anti-plagiarism software. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand.

Diversity and Nondiscrimination

Dalhousie University is committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the worth and dignity of every person. The University recognizes the diversity of its students and is committed to providing a learning experience in which students are able to participate, without discrimination on grounds prohibited by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. In particular, the University is committed to facilitating students' access to the University's academic programs, activities, facilities and services.

The University seeks to develop and nurture diversity and encourages each individual to reach his or her own potential. Dalhousie University prohibits discrimination against any member of the university community on the basis of race, religion, color, age, gender, ethnic, national or aboriginal origin, marital status, parental status, disability, source of income, political belief and sexual orientation.

The University is obliged to make every reasonable effort short of undue hardship to take substantial, timely and meaningful measures to eliminate or reduce the discriminatory effects of the learning and community environment.

Course Evaluation

At the end of each course, you will be invited and encouraged to complete a formal course evaluation. Evaluations provide an opportunity to provide honest and anonymous feedback on course content and instruction quality. Your feedback contributes to continuous improvement of our courses. We would appreciate hearing your thoughts and opinions on the course/program. Thank you for engaging in this process. All responses will be held in strictest confidence.

Special Needs and Accommodation

It is the student's responsibility to self-identify and make a request for accommodation. The request for accommodation must be made reasonably in advance of the course or program in relation to which accommodation is being sought so that a decision can be made. The University will consider a request for accommodation made by a third party (physician, family member, caregiver, advocate or other representative) only where the student has provided prior written consent.

A request for accommodation must include the reasons for the accommodation, supporting documentation, the accommodation being requested and suggestions as to how the accommodation can be achieved, copies of medical reports (if applicable) to substantiate the request and where the request relates to a learning disability, a report describing the nature of the disability.

Disability Statement

In an effort to create a classroom environment that maximizes the success of all students, we encourage you to make us aware of any barriers that may inhibit your learning. Please feel free to ask any time about concerns or questions you may have about assignments, activities, or examinations.

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