



Canadian Association of Programs in Public Administration  
Association Canadienne Des Programmes en Administration Publique  
**Accreditation Board / Conseil d'accréditation**

October 3, 2019

Stephanie Paterson, PhD  
Professor and MPPPA Director  
Department of Political Science  
Concordia University

Dear Dr. Paterson,

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019, the CAPPAA Accreditation Board received the formal request from your department requesting the extension of the accreditation period for your MPPPA program from 2 years to the full seven period. The request included additional material on your program to justify extending accreditation to the full period as we had requested in our previous response to you on this matter. The Board had the opportunity to consider this request and the new material at our meeting on September 6, 2019. This letter outlines the Board response to your request. Given that you noted in the August 9<sup>th</sup> email correspondence that you would be taking over the file from Dr. Graham Dodds, I am sending this letter to you.

In 2018, the CAPPAA Accreditation Board notified the Concordia program that the MPPPA program would receive accreditation for two years during which time the Concordia department was encouraged to address four main issues raised in the reviewers' report on the MPPPA program. At Dr. Dodds request, I met with him in May 2019 to discuss the Concordia request for the extension of the accreditation period. On June 19<sup>th</sup>, I wrote to Dr. Dodds to confirm the details of that conversation and to lay out the process for reconsideration of the full period. In that letter I noted that the CAPPAA Board had agreed to an exceptional and expedited review procedure for the Concordia MPPPA program given that the particular circumstances of the accreditation review had not been anticipated when the new procedures were introduced. The letter also specified that Concordia would need "to demonstrate substantial progress on or intention of meeting the recommendations" of the reviewers as outlined in the letter of June 26, 2018 from the previous Board Chair Dr. Michael Atkinson. The four recommendations included: the development of a mission statement that reflects the program's purpose and objectives; the existence of a diverse faculty with at least five full-time faculty members or their equivalent, faculty with extensive public sector and professional expertise, and a succession plan that ensures the continuity of the program at a level consistent with CAPPAA's standards for accreditation; an improved plan for ensuring basic skills and competencies are acquired by the students, including revisions to the curriculum (Tools and Techniques); and, documentation that the program provides instruction in the tools and techniques requisite for public sector leadership and ethics. Concordia has now provided documentation that the department believes demonstrates substantial progress in these four areas, while noting that some efforts at improvement "are still ongoing." The Accreditation Board addresses the Concordia request below, beginning with the four areas.

Board/Conseil Chair: Kathy Brock (Queen's)

Board/Conseil Members Luc Bernier (Ottawa), Ian Clark (Toronto), Nancy Olewiler (SFU), David Siegel (Brock)

## 1. MISSION

The Concordia Faculty of the Department of Political Science have revised the mission statement for the MPPPA program. We took special note of the intention to update the four-decade-old mission statement, “to more accurately describe the program and its purposes, and to indicate what is distinctive about the program, while maintaining the level of generality that is characteristic of such statements.” We also noted that “all MPPPA faculty members were involved in the revision process.” The new mission statement is:

The Masters in Public Policy and Public Administration program provides students with the expertise and skills required for a professional career in the public service and/or for the pursuit of advanced academic training in the field of policy studies and public administration. Our graduates benefit from a network of alumni working in government, academia, and non-profit sectors, established over the course of more than thirty years, who have made significant contributions to Canadian policy and administration. Situated within the Department of Political Science, this program offers students a variety of educational experiences that aim to bridge academia and practice. Through our distinctive and diverse set of courses, workshop series, and a nationally-recognized internship program, we provide students with a unique combination of the theoretical foundation and practical skills they need to excel in the study and practice of public policy. Representing diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences, our graduates emerge as critical thinkers, problem-solvers and engaged leaders dedicated to the betterment of their local, national, and global communities.

The CAPP Accreditation Board notes that the statement demonstrates substantial progress in meeting the recommendation of the accreditation review committee. The statement is more informative and up-to-date. We thought it prudent to identify the program as housed within the Department of Political Science because that signals to future students that the program will reflect that orientation and approach to preparing students for a career in the public service. It also engages CAPP criteria for accreditation that are appropriate to a department-based program rather than those that are appropriate for a program housed in a stand-alone school of policy studies.

## 2. PERSONNEL

The Concordia request included an outline of the primary faculty members who teach in the MPPA program, other faculty from the Political Science department who teach courses in the MPPPA program and have experience but whose primary expertise may not be public policy and administration, and an explanation of the Public-Administration-Scholar-In-Residence (PASIR) program. The Board noted that a list of instructors with course numbers was appended as well as short biographies of the primary faculty. While it would have been more useful to have an explanation of how the instructors’ expertise or experience fit with the courses they were teaching, we agreed that it is clear that the department currently has adequate personnel to deliver its courses. We note the excellence of academic faculty in their areas of expertise. We also noted the high quality and level of engagement of practitioner-faculty associated with the program and encourage the department to encourage this practice of mixing academic and practitioner instructors in the delivery of the MPPPA.

The Board thought the PASIR program and its first office-holder provided an interesting opportunity to advance the education of the students in the program, including the preparation of students for the CAPPAs case competition. We encourage the Department to ensure that a high quality of appointment is made to the position of PASIR for each two-year term and commend the efforts to secure funding to enhance this position. This position offers an important mentoring opportunity to the students and we encourage it to be used fully. We were encouraged that the current PASIR has expressed an interest in continuing to teach the *Minding the Gap in Public Policy* course after his term is finished since this will add to the consistency of course offerings while the next PASIR will further expand them. We also note that the PASIR is well positioned to extend the mentoring from the case competition to a broader base of students in the program by hosting a post-competition debriefing in the course on the case competition mentioned below. In sum, the PASIR is an important development in the MPPPA program with much potential for the future.

We suggested that the department had to demonstrate substantial progress and not necessarily full compliance with the recommendations of the CAPPAs MPPPA program reviewers. In line with this stipulation, we strongly encourage the department to continue to fill any positions that become vacant to cover major areas of the program and ensure student competencies are served. We very strongly encourage the department to continue its efforts “to come to agreement on a multi-year hiring plan and to establish which substantive areas should be prioritized in seeking new faculty positions, including Canadian public administration.” Although guarantees of new positions are uncertain in universities, CAPPAs believes that succession planning is critical for maintaining accreditation and building a strong MPPPA program into the future. Not only should the department be committed to these goals, the Concordia administration should remain committed to creating new faculty positions to sustain and enhance the mission of the program. To complement the academic expertise, the department should continue to build its core of public sector practitioners who can contribute to the professional development goals of the program. Succession planning is vital to consistency in curriculum and improvement in quality of programming.

### 3. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The CAPPAs reviewers recommended that the tools and techniques of the MPPPA program be enhanced to ensure that appropriate skills and competencies are imparted to the Concordia students. The CAPPAs Accreditation Board accepts the department position that some competencies may be integrated into other courses rather than being delivered through courses dedicated to certain skills and competencies. Students in the MPPPA program are likely to acquire some basic knowledge of budgeting and program evaluation through this method of competency delivery. We also accept that the WSSR provides an excellent vehicle for familiarizing students with key issues in the public sector and techniques of policy analysis, consultation and measurement and evaluation. However, we also note that this knowledge might also be episodic and partial or situation specific. As a result, we applaud the additional steps taken by the department to enhance the student learning experience. In particular the changes to the internship program and the addition of a seminar course on professional development (POLI 602) are excellent building blocks to a stronger MPPPA and enhanced learning environment. The addition of a course focused on developing the skills for the case competition with the provision that the top four students will attend the national case competition and report back to the other students (debrief) is commendable.

The Board was encouraged to see that the Department of Political Science is in the process of developing a new graduate quantitative methods course. This may be a nice complementary course to the mandatory introductory quantitative methods course in the MPPPA. We also note that the students have the option of taking economics and econometrics courses through the Economics department. However, the Board also notes the increasing importance of data analytics and economic analysis in the policy process. For this reason, we strongly encourage the faculty to look at further means of strengthening and supplementing the program evaluation, economics and quantitative analysis components of the MPPPA curriculum. While the program reflects the political science and public policy and administration orientation laid out in the mission statement, integrating dedicated courses on program evaluation and economics and quantitative analysis would broaden the skill set of students and prepare them even more effectively to deal with wicked and polycentric policy challenges. This is likely to become even more important in future reviews of the MPPPA and will build on the success of the MPPPA in placing its students into successful careers in the public service.

#### 4. ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP

The CAPP Accreditation Board accepts that the MPPPA program does have courses addressing leadership skills and public sector ethics and values as outlined in its letter to the Board. However, this aspect of the MPPPA program may be strengthened by more regular or consistent offerings of current courses on like POLS-621 Political Leadership and Decision-making and the one on Ethics in the Public Sector as well as the addition of a course on leadership within the Public Sector. The internship is also an important means of providing the students with experiential learning in these areas provided that they are encouraged to reflect on the lessons learned. The engagement of leading public figures through the WSSR program element in the MPPPA is excellent and should be continued.

We also note with interest the possible creation of an executive MPPPA certificate program. This may be an additional means of enhancing the MPPPA program if certain courses bring the regular and executive MPPPA students together to learn from each other as is done in other programs. We ask the department to consider whether this creates an opportunity to reinforce the need for faculty resource planning. For example, it may offer the opportunity to engage more faculty with extensive experience in the public sector.

#### CONCLUSION AND DECISION

In conclusion, the CAPP Accreditation Board believed it would be remiss if it did not reflect on its own mission statement in making the decision on whether or not to extend the accreditation period of the Concordia MPPPA to the full seven-year period. As we state on the CAPP website:

AN ACCREDITED PROGRAM PROVIDES AN EDUCATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THAT PREPARES STUDENTS FOR A CAREER IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT. FOR STUDENTS, ACCREDITATION MEANS ASSOCIATION WITH A PROGRAM THAT HAS UNDERGONE A RIGOROUS PEER REVIEW PROCESS AND HAS BEEN JUDGED BY ITS PEERS TO BE OF HIGH QUALITY. PROGRAMS SEEKING ACCREDITATION MUST COMPLY WITH CAPP STANDARDS. THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS IS DESIGNED TO FOSTER

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT EVEN AFTER  
ACCREDITATION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED.

With this statement in mind, we come to two conclusions, First, as a department-based program, the Concordia MPPPA meets the standards to warrant accreditation for the full seven year period (2018-2025). Second, given that the accreditation process is designed to foster continuous assessment and improvement, we strongly suggest that the administration, department and faculty should review the areas of possible improvement mentioned in this letter and continue to strive for an even richer learning experience for its students. While substantial progress to meeting the recommendations of the reviewers has been made, we are confident that the department will continue to strive to improve the program as suggested in this letter. Please accept my warmest congratulations on behalf of the Board, for what you have accomplished with the MPPPA and best wishes as you continue to build your program.

Sincerely,



Kathy L. Brock, Ph.D.  
Chair, Accreditation Board/Conseil d'accréditation  
Canadian Association of Programs in Public Administration/  
Association Canadienne des Programmes en Administration Publique  
Professor and Senior Fellow, School of Policy Studies and  
Department of Political Studies (cross-appointed)  
Queen's University  
138 Union Street  
Kingston, Ontario K7L 3N6