Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation (MSPI) Graduate Student Handbook

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Purpose and Scope of the Handbook

This handbook is meant to answer critical questions about the Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation (MSPI) graduate program. All graduate students and graduate faculty are expected to be familiar with its contents. Because policies and procedures are evolving constantly, this handbook is not the definitive record of all University, Faculty and MSPI Program rules. Instead, it establishes general norms and guidelines. When in doubt, consult the Graduate Program Staff, the MSPI Graduate Program Director, and/or the School of Graduate and Professional Studies website.

Faculty of Social Science and Humanities Statement on Inclusivity: The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities is committed to building a truly inclusive educational community where faculty, students, and staff share the responsibility for promoting the values of fairness, justice, and non-discrimination, and for ensuring myriad voices, faces, and experiences are recognized and represented. We embrace and honour the dignity of individuals and groups, and believe that diversity, in all its complex dimensions, lays the foundation for academic excellence and creative learning. The Faculty is, therefore, dedicated to creating a welcoming and supportive campus culture and to challenging all forms of systemic discrimination experienced by historically disadvantaged groups, including but not limited to groups marked by race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, disability, sexuality, gender identity and expression, and socioeconomic status.

Land Acknowledgement
Ontario Tech University acknowledges the lands and people of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. We are thankful to be welcomed on these lands in friendship. The lands we are situated on are covered under the Williams Treaties and the traditional territory of the Mississauga, a branch of the great Anishinaabeg Nation, including Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi. These lands remain home to a number of Indigenous nations and people.

We acknowledge this land out of respect for the Indigenous nations who have cared for Turtle Island, also called North America, from before the arrival of settler peoples until this day. Most importantly, we remember the history of these lands has been tainted by poor treatment and a lack of friendship with the First Nations who call them home.

This history is something we are all affected by as we are all treaty people in Canada. We all have a shared history to reflect on, and each of us is affected by this history in different ways. Our past defines our present, but if we move forward as friends and allies, then it does not have to define our future.

MSPI Program Administration

The MSPI Graduate Program Director is responsible for guiding and managing all aspects of the program. The Graduate Program Assistant carries out essential administrative tasks (e.g., documenting student progress, managing teaching assistant and research assistant assignments). In addition, the MSPI Graduate Committee, which meets throughout the year, makes decisions related to the graduate program (e.g., curriculum decisions, policies and procedures, recruiting and admissions).

At the start of every calendar year, current MSPI students will choose by consensus or by election one MSPI student to serve on the MSPI Graduate Committee. The Graduate Student Representative will serve two roles: 1) to attend selected MSPI Graduate Committee meetings addressing issues related to curriculum, major research projects, and/or any matters where student input would be helpful; and 2) to bring issues raised by MSPI graduate students to the attention of the committee. All MSPI students can bring any issues that they wish to have discussed at the committee level to the Graduate Program Director or the Graduate Student Representative.

2024/25 MSPI Program Administration:

MSPI Graduate Program Director (GPD):
Dr. Andrea Slane (to December 31, 2026)

Graduate Program Assistant:
Lidiya Anton
Charles Hall, Room 316
905.721.8668 ext. 3403
Email: SSHgrad@ontariotechu.ca

MSPI Graduate Committee:
Faculty Representatives (2025-26): Andrea Slane (Legal Studies), Shanti Fernando (Political Science), Zenia Kish (Communication and Digital Media Studies), Isabel Pedersen (Communication and Digital Media Studies)

Graduate Student Representative (each calendar year): Kailey Haskell (2026); Darcy Piercey-Andrews (2025); Joseph Young (2024).

MSPI Graduate Program Overview

The Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation (MSPI) is an interdisciplinary program at the intersection of studies of law, communication and digital media, and political science. Each of these disciplines provide different tools with which to identify, analyze, and initiate action on the complex challenges of our contemporary social world. Graduate students in the MSPI program will take courses across the three disciplines to conceptualize practices which address social problems and build collaborations with diverse communities. Addressing social problems through social innovation involving the creation, development, adoption, and integration of new and renewed concepts, systems, and practices are core elements of this approach.

The MSPI program culminates in a Major Research Project (MRP) aimed at public and community engagement. Through the MRP, MSPI graduates will be trained to formulate, develop and deploy effective and creative solutions to challenging and often systemic social and political issues in ways that can support social progress.

MSPI Programs Map and Requirements

The MSPI Program requires 18 credits of course work as set out in the below program map, followed by 12 credits dedicated to the Major Research Project (MRP). Courses in the Fall semester are offered every year and are mandatory. Some courses in the Winter semester will change from year to year. Other options may be made available to as we develop different options for completing the degree. The Full-time Program Map is the standard that most students will follow. A new option is represented in the Part-time map that follows. An Accelerated Map (proposed) is attached and compared to the other maps as Appendix A - we expect that the accelerated option will become available beginning in Fall 2026.

Full-time Program Map: 4 consecutive semesters

Fall 1	**9 credits:** MSPI 5030G Foundations for Social Practice and Innovation (6 credits) One of: MSPI 5010G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits) MSPI 5020G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Community (3 credits)
Winter 1	**9 credits:** One of: MSPI 5010G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits) MSPI 5020G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Community (3 credits) Two of: ■ MSPI 5040G Advocacy, Change and Social Practices (3 credits) ■ MSPI 5050G Communicating Law and Politics in Everyday Life (3 credits) ■ MSPI 5060G Information, Power, and Democracy (3 credits) ■ MSPI 5070G Special Topics in Interdisciplinary Studies (3 credits) ■ MSPI 5080G Directed Studies (3 credits) ■ Approved cross-listed 4000U level courses
Spring/ Summer 1	**6 credits:** MSPI 5001G Major Research Project I (6 credits)
Fall 2	**6 credits:** MSPI 5002G Major Research Project II (6 credits)*

* MRP 2 is granted retroactively when the MRP is approved – if a student does not complete the MRP in Fall 2 semester, students can extend the program by as many additional consecutive semesters as needed, up to a maximum of 3 years. For full time students, 3 years is the maximum to complete a masters degree according to university policy.

Part-time Program Map (7 or more consecutive semesters)

Fall 1	**6 credits:** 5030G: Foundations (6 credits)

Winter 1	3 (or 6) credits: One of: MSPI 5010G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits) MSPI 5020G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Community (3 credits) If 6 credits, then one of: MSPI Interdisciplinary courses 5040/5050/5060/5070 (3 credits)
Spring/ Summer 1	3 credits: MSPI 5080G Directed Studies (3 credits) or approved 4th Year undergraduate course (3 credits)
Fall 2	3 credits: One of: MSPI 5010G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits) MSPI 5020G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Community (3 credits)
Winter 2	3 (or 6) credits: One (or two, if not taken in Winter 1) of: MSPI Interdisciplinary courses 5040/5050/5060/5070 (3 credits)
Spring/ Summer 2	3 or 6 credits: 5101G: MRP 1a - Proposal Development (3 credits) OR 5001G: MRP 1 (6 credits)
Fall 3	3 or 6 credits: 5102G: MRP 1b (if 5101G taken in previous semester) (3 credits) OR 5002G: MRP 2 granted retroactively when the MRP is approved if 5001G taken in previous semester (6 credits)
Winter 3 and beyond	5002G: MRP 2 is granted retroactively when the MRP is approved (6 credits) – can be extended over several semesters**

** Once a part time student has completed all course work, they can decide (along with their supervisor) how quickly they can get the MRP done. Part time students have a maximum of 6 years to complete a masters degree according to university policy.

Graduate Course Descriptions

Core courses:

MSPI 5010G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits): Over the past decades, social science and humanities faculties, departments, journals, conferences and granting agencies, as well as governmental policy-making institutions and their respective stakeholders have emphasized the value of interdisciplinary research to social innovation and

change. Interdisciplinary research blends two or more disciplines into a new or innovative approach. What interdisciplinary approaches are available to scholars and what theoretical and methodological challenges do they face when designing and undertaking interdisciplinary research? Students will be introduced to a variety of complementary and competing approaches to foundational interdisciplinary methods and theoretical frameworks. Case studies across the disciplines will highlight how these approaches enable us to pursue diverse research questions and frame analysis for interdisciplinary research projects.

MSPI 5020G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice: Community Engaged Research (3 credits): The course focuses on community-engaged and community-based research, a broad constellation of research approaches that share the premise that members of researched communities are best positioned to identify the injustices they experience and the social change they need. Community-engaged research takes myriad forms, cutting across disciplinary boundaries, meaning that lessons learned from community engagement can apply to the full range of theoretical and methodological approaches available to students for their Major Research Projects. Students will construct their own interdisciplinary approach to a research question or problem arising from the points of contact between the three fields that anchor the program: Communication and Digital Media Studies, Legal Studies, and Political Science. Students will work together and independently to develop new intersections across these fields, working toward articulating informed, engaging, and creative social practices.

MSPI 5030G Foundations for Social Practice and Innovation (6 credits): This course provides students with the means to employ core concepts from and across the three disciplines that comprise the interdisciplinary program: communication, legal studies, and politics. **The communication component** examines foundational and current works in new media and communication studies, with a focus on how current and emerging technologies may be designed and used by individual and collective actors for practices oriented to social innovation and transformation. **The legal studies component** engages legal concepts that address the role of law in supporting or discouraging social innovation. **The politics component** explores the realm of politics and the political by focusing on different forms of understanding society, governance and power. Students will begin to formulate their approach to their intended research topics in ways that benefit from these disciplines and their interrelationships.

Required Interdisciplinary courses - Two of the following:
Note that elective courses will be offered on rotation, so not all will be offered in any given year

MSPI 5040G Advocacy, Change and Social Practices (3 credits): This course asks how advocacy can be integrated into social action in order to prompt interpersonal, legal, political, and economic reform. Students will consider historical and contemporary examples of allyship and inter-community relationship-building enacted through discourse, community and grassroots organizing, lobbying, protests, and artistic works. They will learn key theories of solidarity and social change found in scholarly research and activist movements while investigating the impacts of collective action on law, policy, and personal and professional practice. Students will examine several specific areas of impact, such as Indigenous sovereignty, healthcare service provision, homelessness and poverty reduction, climate action, consumer protection, labour, and rights advancement of women and sexual minorities, Indigenous and other racialized and equity seeking groups. This course will afford students opportunities to explore 1) how to strategically mobilize against unequal access to power and resources, 2) how to support the empowerment of populations vulnerable to material deprivation and violence, and 3) how to create transformative and restorative alternatives to unjust conditions.

MSPI 5050G Communicating Law and Politics in Everyday Life (3 credits): In this course, students will develop critical and analytical skills in order to evaluate the nature of political and legal communication in everyday life. As the digital age allows instantaneous and ongoing narrativizing and framing of events and phenomena in real-time to both worldwide and highly specialized audiences, an in-depth understanding of narratives and frames, and how to create and interpret compelling legal and political narratives and frames, is becoming increasingly relevant. Students will learn to employ analytical approaches through framing theory and narrative analysis.

MSPI 5060G Information, Power, and Democracy (3 credits): The means to amass and analyze data and the technologies of informational identity have been developing for more than a century, bringing us to the present moment where the internet, social media platforms, networked devices and other means of dataveillance have become integral to how we as citizens are addressed, assessed and characterized by governments, political parties, corporations and individuals. The centrality of information-gathering practices to governance, election campaigns, social movement activism and marketing requires understanding of existing and yet-to-be-determined legal, political and ethical tools in order to constrain misuse of information and other data while also facilitating and protecting the flow of information to address power imbalances. This course probes how information technologies link with contemporary politics and governance, including settler-colonial governance, and engages topical and contentious ethical debates surrounding the historical transformation of democracy and consumer society in the digital age.

MSPI 5070G Special Topics in Interdisciplinary Studies (3 credits): Special topics will address recent conceptual and methodological advances or emerging issues and trends at the intersection of the disciplines participating in the program. The course may be cross-listed with approved fourth-year undergraduate seminars.

MSPI 5080G Directed Studies (3 credits): Faculty permission may be given for supervised research projects, individual study, or directed readings in a specialized area not covered in the regular course offerings. Students wishing to pursue a course of directed studies must formulate a proposal comprehensively describing the course activities, readings, and schedule, in collaboration with a qualified faculty member who is willing to serve as supervisor. This course may be only taken once.

Required Major Research Project courses: total 12 credits

MSPI 5001G Major Research Project I (6 credits)*: The standard time to complete the Major Research Project (MRP) is two terms. In the first term, this course provides a framework for the development and implementation of the MRP, which is the culminating requirement of the degree program. Students will develop the theoretical and methodological approach to their research topic for their MRP proposal. In the MRP proposal, students will explain the social problem addressed by their research question, and their plan to engage with a community or public outside of the university through an outward-facing component of the project. The proposal will set out the form of the outward-facing component, for example, digital media advocacy, a public education campaign, an event, or an exhibition. Upon approval of the proposal, students will then work with their faculty supervisor on the implementation of the project, which will be concluded in the MRP second term.

MSPI 5002G Major Research Project II (6 credits): Students in the second phase of the Major Research Project (MRP) will carry out the project approved in MRP I. Students will execute their plan for social practice and/or innovation that engages with communities or publics, and will

compose the project's outward-facing component as developed in the proposal (for instance, digital media advocacy, a public education campaign, an event or an exhibition). Students will write a summative report or academic article that self-reflexively describes, explains and assesses the efficacy of the project's social practice and/or innovation.

*Part time or Accelerated students can divide Major Research Project I into two 3 credit parts by taking both of the following in consecutive semesters:

MSPI 5101G Major Research Project 1A (3 credits)
The course is intended for part-time or accelerated MSPI students who are in their first MRP term. In this course, students will craft the framework for their MRP, which is the culminating requirement of the degree program. Students will work with their supervisor to develop the theoretical and methodological approach to their research topic and articulate it in their MRP proposal. Students will explain the social problem addressed by their research question, and set out their proposed plan to engage with a community or public through an outward-facing component of the project, for example, digital media advocacy, a public education campaign, an event, or an exhibition. Satisfactory approval of the proposal by the student's supervisor and interdisciplinary advisor is required to pass this course.

MSPI 5102G: Major Research Project 1B
The course is intended for part-time or accelerated MSPI program students who have successfully completed MSPI 5101G. In this course, students will begin implementing their proposed plans. This will include applying the proposed methodology to address their research question, and instantiating their plan for the outward-facing component of the project. Satisfactory progress toward implementation will be determined by the student's supervisor.

Major Research Project (MRP) Process

Initial ideas for the MRP are developed over the course of the first two semesters' coursework, with the first half of the Spring/Summer semester being dedicated to finalizing a full project proposal, in conjunction with the student's MRP Supervisor and Interdisciplinary Advisor. For full time students, the project is created and implemented in the second half of the third (Spring/Summer) and fourth (second Fall) semesters. Part-time students will spread this process out, according to the map on page 6-7. Courses taken during the first and second semesters provide students with the theoretical and methodological contextualization to support the planned project.

In the MRP proposal, students will describe the design and methodology of the project and situate it within the preferred interdisciplinary framework. Proposals will be assessed by the student's MRP Supervisor, with feedback from the Interdisciplinary Advisor. The Interdisciplinary Advisor will come from a discipline different from that of the supervisor and will provide ongoing opportunities for student consultation during the development of the project to ensure it is interdisciplinary in nature. Following proposal approval, students will work with their MRP supervisor to implement the project, document it, and critically evaluate its efficacy at achieving its social innovation goals. In their final term, students will submit the final project to their MRP Supervisor and the Second Reader as well as make a public presentation of the project to a university and community audience. The Second Reader serves as a neutral evaluator at the final stage, providing the student with constructive feedback from the viewpoint of someone who has not been closely involved in guiding the student's research and development of the project.

Additional support for relevant projects can be provided through the Digital Life Institute, which serves as a research hub for faculty research. The Digital Life Institute is rooted in FSSH but encourages collaboration across Ontario Tech and with external academic partners, focused on the study of new and emerging digital technologies and how they affect social, personal, cultural and artistic practices.

EXAMPLES OF MRPs of MSPI graduates:

2025 graduates	● Measuring the Social Impact of Experiential Learning: Creating a Social Impact Dashboard Prototype for Higher Education (Teresa Goff) ● Voices Unheard: Mapping gaps in social support services for unhoused youth in Toronto (Triona Greaves) ● Pierre Poilievre's X: A Study of the Main Streaming of Far-Right Dog Whistles (Shaun McLeod) ● Shades of Green: An Analysis of Environmental Politics in Durham Region (Joseph Young) ● Through the Lens of Dignity: A Photovoice Exploration of Structural Violence within Ontario Works (Aurazu Zahidi)

MRP Process Timeline

Full-time students are expected to complete their Master's degree in four consecutive terms. Adherence to the following timeline will help ensure steady progress through the program and graduation within the standard timeframe. Deviation from the standard timeline below must be approved by the student's supervisor, the MSPI GPD, and in some cases the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS).

FULL TIME STANDARD TIMELINE: *

Term	Key MRP Activities	Milestones and deadlines
Fall 1	● Identify potential topic of interest ● Initiate background research ● Develop a good rough draft of preliminary MRP project description	● Identify potential MRP Supervisor
Winter 1	● Finalize preliminary MRP project description ● Initiate work on MRP proposal with the MRP Supervisor ● Collect relevant literature for MRP proposal ● Identify theoretical framework and begin developing outward facing component of the MRP proposal ● Identify an Interdisciplinary Advisor (in consultation with MRP Supervisor) ● Submit and revise REB application, if applicable	● Submit preliminary MRP project description to MSPI GPD by the end of January ● MRP Supervisors must be finalized by early February ● Interdisciplinary advisors must be finalized by April 30

Spring/ Summer 1	● Develop full MRP proposal ● Work on MRP research design and implementation ● Begin drafting final MRP package	● Submit full MRP proposal by June 15 ● Obtain feedback on proposal from MRP Supervisor and Interdisciplinary Advisor no later than July 15 ● Progress report completed by Supervisor and student due at the end of the semester ● Confirm Second Reader no later than Sept 1
Fall 2	● Complete MRP implementation ● Prepare public presentation on MRP ● Incorporate feedback from the MRP Supervisor, Interdisciplinary Advisor and community partners (where applicable) into complete draft of final MRP project package ● Incorporate feedback from MRP Supervisor and Second Reader into final MRP project package	● Submit a full draft of MRP package to Supervisor by September 15 ● Submit final MRP project package to MRP Supervisor to send to Second Reader by November 1 ● Public presentation of MRP - common date scheduled by GPD in November ● MRP Supervisor and Second Reader feedback provided by November 21 ● Revise final MRP project package and resubmit to MRP Supervisor by December 1 ● Approval of final MRP project package signed off by MRP Supervisor by December 10 ● GPD submits final project approval forms to SGPS by December 13 for Fall graduation

* Part-time and accelerated MRP timelines with new deadlines for MRP milestones are pending.

Finding an MRP Supervisor

Full-time students will submit a preliminary MRP project description to the MSPI Graduate Program Director (GPD) by the end of January in their first year. Part-time students will submit the preliminary MRP project description at the end of January in the year where they intend to begin their first MRP course (MSPI5001G or MSPI5101G). If students have already confirmed a faculty supervisor – in other words, they have spoken with that faculty member and the faculty member has agreed to serve as supervisor -- then the preliminary MRP project description should include a rationale for why this MSPI faculty member is an appropriate supervisor for their proposed project. If no faculty supervisor has yet been confirmed, then the preliminary MRP project description should include any tentative discussions that the student has had with faculty or suggestions as to who may be approached to serve as MRP supervisor for their project. The MSPI GPD and Grad Committee will assist such students with finding an appropriate supervisor.

Decisions regarding MRP supervisors will be confirmed no later than the end of the second week of February in the year in which a student intends to begin their MRP - for full time students, this will be in their second semester. Supervisors, Interdisciplinary Advisors, and Second Readers must be faculty members from the MSPI Program graduate faculty: a regularly [updated list of faculty is on the MSPI webpage](#).

Students will have several opportunities to find out about research areas of the MSPI faculty members and approach them for supervision. For example, the "Foundations of Social Practice and Innovation" course may feature some guest appearances by faculty. The Program will also usually hold a meet and greet orientation event in the fall semester where MSPI students can get to know faculty who are available for MRP supervision.

The Preliminary MRP Project Description

The preliminary MRP project description should be 750-800 words long and include the following:
- Description of the social problem that will be addressed by the student's project and the community and/or public with whom it connects
- Description of the research question(s) or problem(s) that the project addresses
- Description of why this project matters to the student / to the world
- Description of idea for methodology
- Description of the outward facing component of the project
- Description of interdisciplinary aspects
- Rationale for confirmed or proposed supervisor, as applicable

*It is recommended that students who plan to interview, survey, or otherwise incorporate direct data gathering from human subjects discuss their ideas with their Supervisor at the preliminary project description stage.

Selecting an Interdisciplinary Advisor and Second Reader

Interdisciplinary Advisors serve to provide feedback on your MRP proposal and may serve as a resource on interdisciplinary aspects of your MRP project as you implement it. Your Interdisciplinary Advisor must be a MSPI faculty member who is seated in a different discipline than your supervisor. Your supervisor can help you identify a suitable Interdisciplinary Advisor, as can the MSPI GPD. While not common, if you choose to have co-supervisors and they are from different disciplines you will not need an Interdisciplinary Advisor.

A Second Reader provides feedback on the final MRP project package, and along with the MRP Supervisor, determines when the MRP satisfies the requirements for the degree. The Second Reader can be any MSPI grad faculty member. Second Readers should be determined by the MRP supervisor and the student no later than the first day of the student's final semester. The Second Reader and Interdisciplinary Advisor cannot be the same person.

MRP Proposal

The proposal must contain the following components. The page lengths are suggested guidelines, and adjustments can be worked out with the student's supervisor:

- A description of the social problem that will be addressed by the project (½ page);
- The research question(s) or problem(s) that the project addresses (½ page);
- A review of relevant literature about the social problem, including an explanation of its causes, and an overview of the proposed or applied solutions (e.g., knowledge of existing social practices and/or innovations intended to solve the social problem) ; this section should also include an interdisciplinary aspect, demonstrating integration of at least two of the three MSPI disciplines (4-5 pages);
- A description of how the project advances social practices/innovations that respond to/aim to solve the problem (½-1 page);
- The theoretical approach to the research question (2 pages);
- The methodology for addressing and engaging with the social problem through the social practice and/or innovation (in the outward facing project), and confirming that an REB application has been submitted (if applicable) (2 pages);
- The plan for the outward-facing component of the project, including a description and justification of the format (e.g., digital media advocacy, a public education campaign, an event, creative work, digital media product or exhibition) (2-3 pages).

NOTE: Students are not required to secure a community partner, but they are welcome to do so as relevant to their project. If work with a community partner is involved, consult with the MRP supervisor regarding the Research Ethics Board (REB) approval process. REB approval takes extra time and must be planned for early in the decision-making regarding the topic/project. As noted above, it is recommended that students who plan to interview, survey, or otherwise incorporate direct data gathering from human subjects discuss their ideas with their Supervisor at the preliminary project description stage, as the length of the REB approval process is unpredictable.

The proposal should be between 3500-4000 words (approximately 12-15 double-spaced pages, including references and graphics).

The proposal must be approved by the MRP supervisor, in consultation with the Interdisciplinary Advisor in order to successfully complete the first MRP course (MSPI5001G or MSPI5101G). The feedback provided by the supervisor and interdisciplinary advisor is meant to provide the student with the means to implement their project and work toward the final MRP package. MRP supervisors may require revisions in order to achieve those goals, but often they will consider the student's acceptance of the feedback sufficient to move them forward in the project's implementation.

Characteristics of an MRP

An MRP is not a traditional thesis. It is intended to be an action-oriented and outward-facing project. Each final MRP package will include a written component (akin to an article or a chapter) and an implementational component that outlines application of a proposed social innovation to a defined challenge or problem, normally located in the community or otherwise outside of the university, though there are exceptions to this norm. This outward-facing component may range from a highly conceptual proposal for change to an executed practical collaboration that shows an evident outcome in the form, for example, of an advocacy or public education campaign, providing support to the goals of a community organization, or a creative work (e.g., an exhibition or digital media product). The MRP should also include a reflection on the limits of the implementation plan and its efficacy at achieving social innovation goals.

The final MRP package will normally be between 9,000 and 10,000 words (approximately 35-40 pages double-spaced, exclusive of references, supporting documentation, visualization or other strategies). Students may exceed this guideline with the approval of their MRP supervisor.

Here are some general guidelines for what the **final MRP package** should include:
- Abstract – 1-2 paragraphs
- Introduction – 3-5 pages
- Theoretical Framework – 2-3 pages
- Literature Review – 8 pages max, including interdisciplinary aspect
- Methodology – including REB approval if applicable, 3-5 pages
- Narrative account of outward facing component – can include tables, graphs and figures, if appropriate. Students are not required to secure a community partner for their project, but engagement with expertise within the community is strongly encouraged and should be recounted in this section, 10-15 pages
- Discussion and Reflection – should assess successes and limits of the implementation plan: in other words, discuss the project's efficacy at achieving social innovation goals. Reflect on the limits of the implementation plan and its efficacy at achieving social innovation goals. What could have been improved or done differently to greater effect? Include forward thinking to where this project could go next, in short and/or long term, 10-15 pages
- Conclusion – 3-5 pages
- References

A public event will be held in mid- to late November of the standard timeline student's second year, where students will make a public presentation of their projects. If the project involves a community partner, the student should ensure that a representative of the community partner attends the presentation. Students who are taking additional time to complete the MRP will be encouraged to participate in this public event regardless, to present their project as it develops. When part-time students complete this requirement will be worked out with their supervisor and the GPD. Normally, it will be in the final or penultimate semester of the student's degree.

The MRP final project package is evaluated on a pass/fail basis by the Supervisor and the Second Reader. The Second Reader and Supervisor may require revisions. The student must integrate this feedback, in consultation with the Supervisor. The Supervisor will evaluate the student's revisions to determine if they have been successfully implemented before passing the MRP and signing off on the student's successful completion of the degree. The package does not go back to the Second Reader at this stage.

IMPORTANT 2025 DATES FOR THE FINAL MRP PACKAGE:

- **November 1:** Deadline to submit MRP project package to MRP Supervisor and Second Reader

- **Mid to Late November:** Public presentation of MRPs (whole cohort - date set by GPD)

- **November 21:** Deadline for MRP Supervisor and Second Reader to provide feedback to the student

- **December 1:** Deadline to revise MRP project package and resubmit to MRP Supervisor.

- **December 15:** Deadline to submit approved final MRP project package to GPD, signed off by MRP Supervisor

- **December 16 (judging by last year):** Deadline for GPD to submit Certificate of Approval for project/paper to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to ensure graduation by end of fall semester.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of MRP Supervisors

- Be sufficiently familiar with the field of research related to the MRP to provide guidance and/or be willing to gain that familiarity before agreeing to act as a MRP Supervisor.
- Be accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of the student's progress on the MRP throughout the calendar year over which the MRP proposal and its execution are designed to take place (Winter, Spring/Summer and Fall).
- Assist the student in connecting with relevant community organizations or contacts to be involved in the outward facing aspect of the MRP.
- Respond in a timely, consistent and thorough manner to all work submitted by the student, with constructive and well-informed suggestions for improvement and continuation.
- Assist the student in securing an Interdisciplinary Advisor and a Second Reader.
- Endeavour to achieve consensus and resolve differences in the best interests of the student if the Second Reader has different expectations of the MRP project.
- Where applicable, appropriately acknowledge the contributions of the student in the supervisor's own work, such as presentations and published material, via joint authorship or acknowledgement (as appropriate based on the work completed by the student).
- Be sensitive to cultural and other factors which may influence the individual student's learning and research behaviour and experience.
- Make arrangements for continuity of the student's supervision before beginning a leave of absence.

Replacement of Supervisor

- Replacement of MRP supervisors is strongly discouraged, unless for obvious reasons (e.g., supervisor is ill and/or goes on leave)
- In cases where a student requests to be re-assigned, the GPD will meet with the student and the supervisor to determine if re-assignment is appropriate.

Responsibilities of a MSPI Student

a) **Class attendance expectations:** any absences from scheduled classes must be reported to the professor in advance. If the student is absent from more than 25% of class meetings (usually more than 3 classes in a 12 week semester) they will have to meet with the GPD to assess their circumstances.

b) **Course assignments due dates:** students are expected to meet the assignment due dates set out in the syllabus. Extensions must be requested in advance, and with a valid reason.

c) **Commitment to the MRP process:** Students are expected to show substantial effort, initiative and dedication to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue the MRP successfully. This includes:

   i) Working with their MRP supervisor to develop a plan and a timetable for completion of all stages of the project and working assiduously to adhere to a schedule and to meet appropriate deadlines;

   ii) Showing substantial effort, initiative and dedication to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue the MRP successfully;

   iii) Meet regularly with their MRP supervisor (at least monthly) once supervisor has been assigned.

d) **Matter affecting student progress through the program:** Students are expected to keep the GPD fully informed regarding any personal, financial or medical matter relevant to the student's status in the program, and are expected to seek advice from their MRP supervisor, as appropriate to help assess how to proceed to MRP completion;

e) **Funding:** Meeting agreed-upon performance standards and deadlines when financial support has been provided by the university or a funding agency, or through a contract or grant; and,

f) **Adhering to the standards** of research ethics, health and safety, and respecting the requirements of academic integrity, honesty and professionalism. This includes, but is not limited to, acknowledging and crediting any source of ideas, assistance (e.g., tutoring or AI generated text), materials and/or data provided by others.

Regular meetings. Students and the MRP Supervisor are expected to meet regularly (at least monthly) throughout the student's MRP process. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the student's progress with the MRP, to help resolve difficulties, and to determine next steps in the research process.

Progress Reports. A Progress Report form must be filled out at the end of each MRP term by the student and their MRP supervisor. For full time standard students, this will be at the end of the Spring/Summer term. Further Progress Reports will be required at the end of any term in which the student has not yet completed the MRP (i.e. if the student requires additional terms, or they are completing the degree part time). As with full-time students, Progress Report forms will be required at the end of each term in which the part-time student is working toward MRP completion.

Student-research supervisor conflicts
It is the responsibility of the university and its faculties to ensure that all graduate students receive appropriate and fair supervision. Due to the nature of the relationship between the student and research supervisor, conflicts may arise. In such instances, the first step must be to attempt to resolve the conflict informally between the student and supervisor. If the matter cannot be resolved, the MSPI GPD will act as a mediator if and when needed. A student who believes the conflict has not been resolved by the GPD should contact the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities. If the conflict persists, the student may pursue appropriate resolution through the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies. Change of supervisor is the normal course of a conflict that cannot be resolved.

Costs of the Program: Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees are set by the University. The MSPI program follows a "flat-fee" tuition structure.

Information for full-time and part-time domestic students can be found here:
https://gradstudies.ontariotechu.ca/current_students/tuition-fees/domestic-tuition-fees/index.php

Information international students can be found here:
https://gradstudies.ontariotechu.ca/current_students/tuition-fees/international-tuition/index.php

Note: Graduate students in other FSSH programs typically do not take courses in the Spring/Summer term, but they are required to pay a "continuance course fee" that is the same as

the tuition rate. Full-time MSPI students who do not finish their degree requirements in 4 terms may enroll in one or more additional term(s), and will be charged the continuance course fee. In the second Fall term, full-time students will not initially register for MSPI5002G (the second MSPI course) and will instead pay the continuance fee and be retroactively enrolled in the 5002 course when they have successfully completed their MRP.

Full time MSPI students will receive an offer of support, usually in the form of a teaching assistant position in the Fall, Winter and second Fall terms. While TA jobs are not guaranteed in the Spring/Summer term, full time MSPI students will have the opportunity to apply for any available TA positions. Full-time students who take extra terms will no longer be guaranteed a TA position beyond the standard four term program expectation, but again may apply for any available positions. Part-time students are not guaranteed support, and are not eligible to apply for TA positions.

Taking a leave of absence
If a student needs to take a break from their studies, they must file a request for a leave of absence form with School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS). Taking a leave of absence should be discussed with your supervisor (if one has already been confirmed) and the MSPI GPD.

Changing from full-time to part-time status
Under certain circumstances, students may change from full-time to part-time status or vice versa. A change in full-time/part-time status form will need to be completed and signed by your supervisor (if one has already been confirmed), the MSPI GPD, and SGPS. The deadline for submitting these forms is normally in the first week of the relevant term. It is important to discuss any intention to change status with your supervisor and/or the MSPI GPD. Note that students changing from full-time to part-time status will no longer be guaranteed TAships or other financial support.

Resources

Space
Graduate students will be provided with communal spaces to carry out their work on campus. Each graduate student is not guaranteed their own space. When graduate students are assigned a TAship for in-person classes, they will sometimes be expected to hold office hours in an allocated TA office (unless otherwise specified by the course instructor).

Equipment and Materials
A faculty laptop may be provided only to students who are TAs in a course and who are unable to perform their duties without it. Required supplies and materials for the TAship (e.g. exam booklets or Scantron sheets) will also be supplied by the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities.

Some resources required for research purposes (e.g., equipment, software) may be provided by the Faculty, but the availability depends on the nature of the research project. For example, the following software applications are available for graduate students: https://itsc.ontariotechu.ca/services/software/software-availability-for-graduate-students.php. Students will likely need to subsidize their own research (e.g., purchase a laptop).

Email Account
All students will be given an Ontario Tech University email account upon accepting their offer of admission. It is important to check this account frequently as it will be used for all essential university correspondence.

Library and Research Databases
There is also a library on each campus that provides you with access to a variety of online research databases, in addition to print resources, either on site or available via interlibrary loan from other institutions. Copies of articles and books that are available through other universities can also be requested online via the inter-library loan program at no cost.

Writing Support
Writing Specialists are also available to graduate students for one-on-one support at The Student Learning Centre. They can help with citation/referencing, sentence structure/variety, etc. It is located at 61 Charles Street on the second floor; virtual appointments are also offered: https://studentlife.ontariotechu.ca/current-students/academic-support/writing-and-english-as-an-additional-language/index.php.

Additional Resources
Students are able to use the health, counselling, and recreational services at North and downtown campuses - for details, please check out Student Life website.

Contributing to the Graduate Community

In addition to the Master's in Social Practice and Innovation, the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities has graduate programs in Criminology and Forensic Psychology. We encourage students to develop relationships across all disciplines and cohorts. All graduate students are on the same team. The goal of graduate studies is to develop breadth and depth in an area of study; one way to accomplish this is to interact with students and faculty members who have different perspectives. Even recent university hiring practices underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches. Students graduating from FSSH have the opportunity to be at the cutting-edge in terms of research and training in this respect. Those who engage in interdisciplinary collegiality will certainly differentiate themselves from others in the workforce.

Norms are in place to ensure that students and faculty members make the most of the graduate programs. We expect that all students and Supervisors will attend Faculty events (e.g., presentations, seminars, meetings, workshops, social occasions). In order to develop a constructive graduate culture, it is important that all members of the program contribute. One of the easiest ways to have an impact is to be present. We also expect students and faculty members to create a positive, cooperative environment for research and learning. Clearly, academic misconduct and impingements on university policies and codes of conduct are unacceptable, as are more subtle forms of negativity (e.g., derision, intimidation, gossip).

As the graduate programs are relatively new, it is essential that members recognize the importance of mutual support. Success of each individual in this program will improve the quality of the graduate experience, the reputation of the program and, ultimately, the value of its degrees. Practicing collegiality will also prepare graduates to work in academic and non-academic settings, where cooperation and diplomacy are important.

Professional Development

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at Ontario Tech University offers a number of workshops on graduate-level writing and presentation skills, among other relevant programming. See the SGPS website for current information on what they offer: https://gradstudies.ontariotechu.ca/. See especially the "Base Camp" programming offered by SGPS: https://gradstudies.ontariotechu.ca/grad-student-engagement/base-camp/index.php.

Gaining Teaching Experience

Most full-time MSPI students will gain exposure to undergraduate teaching experience through being a Teaching Assistant (TA). These paid positions can expose students to a broad array of topics in the discipline beyond those which will be covered in their coursework or MRP. You are also encouraged to take on opportunities to guest lecture or present your MRP projects in an undergraduate course if invited to do so. It will provide you with valuable experience explaining concepts and interacting with students regarding a topic with which you are developing expertise. Typically, these opportunities arise through MSPI faculty. There is no obligation for students to accept the opportunity, nor should they do so if it will interfere with their coursework or research time.

Policies and procedures related to TAships (e.g., hiring priorities, workload, remuneration) are governed by the PSAC collective agreement. If you are serving as a TA, you should familiarize yourself with the terms of this agreement.

Although students will be asked to provide their preferences for TA assignments, such as online or in-person course formats, matches will not always be possible. A TAship will be for a set number of hours, with the specific allocation of those hours at the course instructors' discretion. For example, being a TA might involve holding office hours every week, invigilating examinations, and/or marking assessments. It is essential that students meet with the course instructor for the course or courses they have been assigned at the beginning of each semester to complete the Work Supervisor and Teaching Assistant Hours of Work Form and discuss assigned duties. Note that busy times as a TA will usually coincide with the times that grad courses are busy. It is important to be very well-organized and to have strong time management skills.

Applying for Funding

Graduate students have access to a variety of financial support mechanisms, including the Ontario Tech University scholarships and bursaries, external awards (e.g., Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program, SSHRC), teaching, and research assistantships. Students are strongly encouraged to apply to provincial and federal granting agencies for graduate scholarships.

Scholarship	Competition deadline
Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) - Incoming and first year domestic MSPI students are eligible to apply; first year international students are eligible to apply (must hold a valid study permit at the time of application).	Early December Ontario Tech OGS
Canada Graduate Scholarship - Masters (CGS-M) - Incoming and first year domestic MSPI students are eligible to apply for a CGS-M.	Early December - see Ontario Tech CGS-M

FSSH Graduate Awards

Graduate Fellowship Award
The first year graduate students will vote on this award anonymously. The students will vote for the fellow student they believe to be the most collegial and supportive of their peers.

Outstanding Graduate Student Award
The recipient of this award will be determined based on the quality of their thesis or major paper and their GPA at the end of their second-year courses. Note this will be based on the six core courses that all students take regardless if they are completing a thesis or a major paper.

Student Paper and Project Competitions

[Canadian Communication Association - CRTC Prize for MA students](#) - excellence in policy research
[Canadian Communication Association - Mahmoud Eid Graduate Prize](#) - research investigating media, ethics, and diversity in Canada.
[Canadian Communication Association - Prize for Outstanding Graduate Student Essay](#) - outstanding graduate student essay
[Canadian Society for Studies in Higher Education](#) - outstanding Master's thesis or project in Canadian universities in the area of higher education
[Canadian Law and Society Association - Roderick A. Macdonald Graduate Student Essay Prize](#) - best essay on a topic in law and society written by a graduate student at a Canadian university

Other Thesis/Project Awards

Three Minute Thesis
The [Three Minute Thesis](#) is a university-wide competition for all graduate students. Students must present their research, and its wider impact, to a panel of non-specialist judges within three minutes. Not only will participating students develop their presentation skills, but they will be eligible for monetary prizes at the university, provincial, and national levels. Typically, the Office of Graduate Studies will solicit participants during the Winter semester.

Outstanding Graduating Sociology Student
Each year the FSSH will nominate one thesis student for the Outstanding Graduating Sociology Student Award granted by the Canadian Sociological Association.

Conferences or Exhibitions to Consider for Showcasing Your MRP

Canadian Communication Association (CCA) Annual Conference at Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences: https://acc-cca.ca/index.php/conference/2023-conference/

Canadian Society for Studies in Higher Education annual meeting: https://csshe-scees.ca/

Canadian Law and Society Association Mid-Year Meeting and Annual Conference: http://www.acds-clsa.com/

APPENDIX A: THREE PROGRAM MAP OPTIONS FOR MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIAL PRACTICE AND INNOVATION

	Current Standard Program Map (4 semesters)	*Accelerated Map (3 semesters)*	*Part-Time Map (7 or more semesters)*
Fall 1	9 credits: 5030G: Foundations (6 credits) 5010G: Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits)	9 credits: 5030G: Foundations (6 credits) 5010G: Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits)	6 credits: 5030G: Foundations (6 credits)
Winter 1	9 credits: 5020G: Theory and Practice: Community (3 credits) Two of: MSPI Interdisciplinary courses 5040/5050/5060/5070 (3 credits x2)	12 (or 9**) credits: 5020G: Theory and Practice: Community (3 credits) Two of: MSPI Interdisciplinary courses 5040/5050/5060/5070 (3 credits x2)** 5101G: MRP 1A - Proposal development (3 credits)	6 credits: 5020G: Theory and Practice: Community (3 credits) One of: MSPI Interdisciplinary courses 5040/5050/5060/5070 (3 credits)
Spring/ Summer 1	6 credits: 5001G: Major Research Project I (6 credits)	9 credits: 5102G: MRP 1B (3 credits) - in the SPRING condensed term 5002G: MRP 2 is granted retroactively when the MRP is approved (6 credits)*	3 credits: MSPI 5080G Directed Studies (3 credits) or approved 4th Year undergraduate course (3 credits)
Fall 2	6 credits: 5002G: MRP 2 is granted retroactively when the MRP is approved (6 credits)*	[If accelerated students do not finish the MRP by the summer deadline, they would continue until they do finish it]	3 credits: 5010G: Theory and Practice: Frameworks (3 credits)
Winter 2			3 credits: One of: MSPI Interdisciplinary courses 5040/5050/5060/5070 (3 credits)
Spring/ Summer 2			3 or 6 credits***: 5101G: MRP 1a - proposal development (3 credits) OR

			5001G: MRP 1 (6 credits)
Fall 3			3 or 6 credits***: 5102G: MRP 1b (if they took 5101) (3 credits) OR 5002G: MRP 2 is granted retroactively when the MRP is approved (6 credits)
Winter 3 and beyond			5002G: MRP 2 is granted retroactively when the MRP is approved (6 credits) – can be extended over several semesters***

* Full time students have a maximum of 3 years to complete a masters degree according to university policy.

** Some Winter term interdisciplinary courses are open to FSSH undergraduate students with a GPA of 3.7 or higher. Students who have taken one of these courses as an undergraduate will get transfer credit into the MSPI program, and so reduce the course load for the Winter term.

*** Once a part time student has completed all course work, they can decide (along with their supervisor) how quickly they think they can get the MRP done. Part time students have a maximum of 6 years to complete a masters degree according to university policy.