



Municipal Administration Program (MAP) Unit 2: Municipal Administrative Structure Course Outline

Updated June 2024

Course Description

MAP Unit 2 focuses on the internal structure and organization of local government in Ontario, the ever-challenging relations between councillors and staff, and the municipal policy-making process. It concludes with an introduction to the nature of municipal management that sets the tone for the remaining two units of the program.

By the end of this unit you will be able to:

- Compare the rationale, benefits, and drawbacks of different municipal governing structures
- Examine the legal, organizational, political, and historical factors that affect council–staff relations and council decision-making processes in your municipality
- Explain the roles of key players in local government and their influence on local political processes and policy decisions
- Identify the key issues and events that led to the current municipal ethics regime and intensified the focus on ethical conduct
- Recognize the challenges of public management and the constraints within which municipal staff operate

The MAP certificate of completion will be issued upon completion of four units:

- Unit 1: Introduction to Local Government
- Unit 2: Municipal Administrative Structure
- Unit 3: Municipal Financial Management
- Unit 4: Management in the Municipality

MAP can be taken on its own or as part of AMCTO's Diploma in Municipal Administration (DMA). It is also the education pre-requisite for AMCTO's Certified Municipal Officer (CMO) and Accredited Municipal Professional (AMP) designations.

Course Delivery Formats

AMCTO offers MAP in two formats: correspondence format and Zoom format.

- If you are taking the course in **correspondence format**, you will complete the assigned readings and submit assessments according to a given schedule. There are no classes to attend. Your work is graded by a marker.
- If you are taking the course in **Zoom format**, you will attend interactive online classes led by an instructor in addition to completing readings and assessments. Your work is graded by the instructor.

Peer-to-peer discussions are an important part of MAP, regardless of the format. All course materials, assessments, and discussion forums (in units where discussion forums apply) are provided through AMCTO's online learning platform, AMCTO Connect.

A syllabus with assessment due dates is provided when the course opens each term.

Grading Scheme

Assessment	Weight
Assignment 1: Municipal Governing Structure	15%
Assignment 2: Politics and Political Acuity in Municipal Government	20%
Assignment 3: Municipal Policy-Making	20%
Final Assignment: Scenario Analysis	30%
Discussion Contributions	15%

To successfully complete the unit, students must earn a minimum grade of 51% on the final assignment and an overall average grade of 60% or higher for the entire unit.

Students who do not achieve 51% but score at least 35% on the final assignment will be given the opportunity for a re-write. This re-write must take place on the date(s) chosen by AMCTO.

Students who score less than 35% on the initial final assignment or under 51% on the re-write will be required to re-register to take the course in its entirety.

Assignment Expectations

MAP is an academic program that requires time commitment for reading, research, and writing. The assignments require you to read the textbook and do additional research on the web to apply the content to real-world examples and issues.

Assignments 1, 2, and 3 comprise essays and memos. Each of these assignments requires writing between 1,000 and 1,500 words.

The final assignment is a report that falls within the range of 1,500 to 2,500 words.

Further guidelines and expectations will be provided with the course syllabus and assignment instructions.

A note on time commitment: When past MAP participants were asked to report how much time they spent on assignments, the responses varied widely because they come to the courses with different levels of prior knowledge, reading/research/writing skills, and professional experience. This makes it difficult to estimate how much time it will take to complete the course work. However, we recommend preparing to spend a minimum of 35 to 40 hours over the course of the term for each unit.

Discussion Expectations

MAP Unit 2 includes discussions where participants share perspectives and observations related to the course topics. They are opportunities to learn from the experiences of different municipalities as well as professionals who work in a variety of roles in local government.

If you are taking the course in correspondence format, you will make discussion contributions with written posts in discussion forums. If you are taking the course in Zoom format, you will contribute to discussions both in class and in discussion forums. Further guidelines and expectations will be provided in the course syllabus.

Due Dates

There will be a schedule of assignment and discussion posting deadlines in the course. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the deadlines and understand the penalties for late submissions under Section 3 of the Education Programs Policy. The policy will be provided in the course syllabus.

Academic Integrity

Students in AMCTO's education programs are expected to abide by the association's policy on academic integrity (section 4 of the Education Programs Policy). Plagiarism is considered academic misconduct and will result in a zero on the entire assignment. Repeated offences will lead to more severe penalties such as expulsion.

Sources used in assignments must be properly cited. Using artificial intelligence (AI) tools or other automated tools to rewrite, paraphrase, or generate responses to assignment or discussion questions is not permitted.

It is the student's responsibility to be informed about the definitions and consequences of academic misconduct. The full policy will be provided in the course syllabus.

MAP Unit 2 Topic Outline

Chapter 1: The Basic Municipal Governing Structure

- The composition and roles of municipal councils
- The respective merits of short-term versus long-term terms of office, election-by-ward versus by general vote, and direct versus indirect election
- Factors that allow heads of council to provide more political leadership than their formal powers would suggest they are allowed to provide
- Factors that allow senior staff such as clerks, treasurers, or chief administrative officers (CAOs) to provide more administrative leadership than their formal powers would suggest they are allowed to provide
- The nature of committees—both standing and advisory—with a focus on the structural advantages and shortcomings of each and important considerations as they pertain to the size of the municipality

Chapter 2: Modifications to the Municipal Governing Structure

- The pressures of change that rendered the traditional governing structure of municipal government increasingly inadequate and ineffective over the past half-century
- The weaknesses found in the traditional municipal structure at both the political and administrative levels
- Differences between the following administrative models: the council manager system, chief administrative officer (CAO) system, commissioner system, and the business model
- Differences between the following political models: board of control, executive committee, and committee of the whole (council)
- The ethical structures and regimes that govern municipal operations: codes of conduct, procedural by-laws, integrity commissioners, and the Ontario Ombudsman
- The effectiveness of various attempts to modify and strengthen municipal structures at both the council and staff levels

Chapter 3: Principal Players at the Local Level

- Factors that influence participation rates in municipal elections and referendums
- The key players (both official and unofficial) in the local political process and the impact of these players on the local political process
- The roles and inter-relationships of councillors and staff
- Ethics in municipal government and the importance of underlying values (the organizational culture) in supporting ethical behaviour

Chapter 4: Municipal Policy-Making

- The nature, complexity, and importance of municipal policy-making
- The differences between the rational model of policy-making and the way individual policy decisions are made in practice
- The main theories or models used to explain municipal policy output
- The various stages in municipal policy-making and the appropriate extent of involvement by councillors and staff in each of these stages
- Ways to improve municipal policy-making and the interaction of councillors and staff within the process

Chapter 5: Introduction to Municipal Management

- The nature of public management (public administration) and how it differs from management in the private sector
- How municipal administration compares with public administration at the provincial and federal levels of government
- Key features of what has become known as the new public management (NPM) movement, and the strengths and shortcomings of this movement
- How NPM applies to municipal operations