

Reimagining the Policy Professional

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To address urgent and complex international and global issues such as climate change, inequality, and security threats, the next generation of leaders will play a vital role in designing, developing, and implementing policy about matters that affect them now and into the future. These leaders need the strategic design, research, and technology-based skills to get them there. New university programs must be designed to build this needed skillset while traditional policy making environments must nourish emerging policy designers by allowing them opportunities to experiment with ideas, technologies, and services. Now, policy leaders in Ottawa and in various sectors across Canada are becoming increasingly vocal about their need for professionals who understand the design process and are adept at applying behavioural insights and big data skills to policy problems, among other approaches.

The University of British Columbia is listening to these emerging needs. UBC's new [Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs \(MPPGA\)](#) equips future leaders with the strategic design skills necessary to navigate wicked policy problems while having a thorough multidisciplinary and intercultural understanding to drive global change. Students expand upon their critical thinking and creative design skills, comfort with ambiguity, and entrepreneurial mindset during their professional program. UBC understands that policy designers and implementers benefit from having a range of tools and approaches at the ready. The strategic design framework is one that balances the need for understanding and analysing big data but also processing thick data – the qualitative and behavioural aspects of global policy work.

Policy Design Leadership: *PolicyStudio@UBC in Ottawa*

In line with the MPPGA's emphasis on integrated learning and innovation is the *PolicyStudio@UBC*. An opportunity recently arose to implement the studio idea in Ottawa - bringing students together with federal government leaders and public servants to design and test solutions in an interdisciplinary setting. Co-Director and Professor Moura Quayle alongside Angele Beausoleil and Marcelo Bravo, PhD students in UBC's Innovation and Strategic Design research group, led MPPGA students in a policy design challenge at the Central Innovation Hub, part of Canada's Privy Council Office in Ottawa. The hub is an innovation catalyst addressing policy challenges in Canada. The goal of the policy studio was to tackle the following challenge: How might we use strategic design to encourage individual actions that reduce our energy consumption?



MPPGA students, UBC faculty and policy makers tackle a policy design challenge in PolicyStudio@UBC.

PolicyStudio@UBC in Ottawa was an example of strategic policy design in action: teams of students and their mentors used explorative techniques, data and visual analysis to determine root causes, define the problem, and co-design and test solutions. Activities included policy canvas design, team building and storytelling, workshops, and prototyping, with immediate feedback provided by faculty and policy practitioners. As MPPGA student Andrés Delgado states "in any policy problem, there is always a more complicated story that is usually overlooked. The policy studio provided the tools to unfold, relate to, and analyze such a story." Students also gained new perspectives on human-centered design cases and networked with policy practitioners from Global Affairs Canada, Aga Khan Foundation, and Ernst & Young.



UBC Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs students travelled to Ottawa to engage in PolicyStudio@UBC.

MPPGA Students: The Next Generation of Policy Designers

The skills and knowledge gained by MPPGA students fostered through their policy studio experiences, professional workshops, and hands-on policy projects are all part of the making of “*Policy Designers*” – a new type of policy professional. “Strategic design, with its focus on citizens as end-users and their interaction with public services, offers a new and promising approach to building better policies and programs,” says Chris MacLennan, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Central Innovation Hub. “By placing the citizen at the centre of the process and involving them in the discussion, design has the potential to significantly change our policymaking toolkit.” MPPGA policy design leaders are equipped with the skillset, practical experience, and global perspective needed to meet the demands of employers and to effectively address the pressing issues the world faces today and into the future.

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