

Rationale

The Master of Research and Public Policy (MRPP) is a new, specialized graduate programme designed and implemented by 16 participating universities through a collaborative process. It is supported by Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR), a Pan- African organization based in Nairobi. Collaborative means 16 partner universities and PASGR working together on the MRPP from conceptualization to design, start and implementation. The MRPP combines social science research training with public policy to attract those who wish to be researchers and future academics as well as those who wish to be policy practitioners.

The following 16 Universities from 9 countries across Africa form the MRPP network:

- . University of Botswana, Botswana
- . University of Cape Coast, Ghana
- . University of Ghana, Ghana
- . Egerton University, Kenya
- . Maseno University, Kenya
- . Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique
- . University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- . University of Jos, Nigeria
- . University of Lagos, Nigeria
- . National University of Rwanda, Rwanda
- . University of Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone
- . University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- . Mzumbe University, Tanzania
- . Makerere University, Uganda
- . Uganda Christian University, Uganda
- . Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda

MRPP graduates should be able to produce social science research that can contribute to public policy and good governance, and also be able to utilize research evidence in public policy development.

Program Objective

The vision underpinning the MRPP is the value of strengthening the production of social science researchers so that they may contribute to public policy development in Sub-1353

Saharan Africa. It was felt that a programme that provides for the development of competencies in research and public policy would generate a cadre of professionals able to work in a wide variety of settings including but not limited to government bodies, think tanks, civil society organizations, regional and international organizations, media and universities.

Discrete learning experiences in the MRPP are integrated into foundation/core courses and concentration courses as well as a field experience, thesis and workshops. The courses are sequenced in a manner that allows students to develop competencies consistent with two career pathways: research pathway for students who are primarily interested in research/teaching and a policy practice pathway for those who wish to use research to influence, inform or shape public policy as policy practitioners.

There are three types of competencies targeted:

- . Common competencies for all students that enable them to understand different conceptual and methodological approaches to social science research; and appreciate various theoretical and conceptual approaches to the formation and analysis of public policy issues;
 - . Capacity to design and execute policy oriented research for those in academia and research organizations; and,
 - . For those in policy development, management and implementation, competencies to apply policy analysis tools to key public policy issues and utilize evidence based research results.
- Three types of courses are designed to move students towards attaining specific competencies as highlighted below:
- . Foundation courses (sometimes referred to as MRPP i° corei± courses) address competencies needed by students on both pathways; and,
 - . Concentration courses (sometimes referred to as MRPP electives) provide more in depth learning experiences to develop competencies associated with one pathway or the other.
 - . University-specific electives that may be provided by individual universities.

One of the design implications is that compared to other graduate programme students have somewhat less flexibility. Aside from some choice in concentration courses, all students will take all MRPP courses.

Admission Requirements

The MRPP aims to attract a rich diversity of qualified students from undergraduates as well as early and mid professionals seeking to build on their expertise. Uniform minimum eligibility criteria and a rigorous selection process will ensure that the students admitted into the programme are motivated, capable of coping with the demands of the programme and developing the required competencies. It will also help ensure that all MRPP universities are accepting students of similar quality.

To be considered for admission all applicants in all universities must meet the following minimum eligibility criteria:

- . Masters degree, or,
- . An Upper Second class Bachelor.s degree (or its equivalent GPA), or higher; or,
- . A Bachelor.s degree of a lower second class, and at least 2 years of work experience in a research or policy field, or a postgraduate diploma.

Eligible candidates will subsequently be considered using a common two-stage selection process determined by each university. The selection process should include:

- . Applications with: a) personal details; b) academic record to date; c) academic and/or professional references; and, d) a letter of motivation.
- . Followed by one or more of the following: a) personal interview; b) written or oral examination, assignment, or task; and/ or c) assessed group exercise.

Course Structure and Duration

Two academic years are recommended for the programme. Each of the academic years will have two semesters. After the first academic year, the students will go for a long break during which they are expected to gain field experience and undertake data collection for their thesis work.

Modes of the programme delivery

MRPP will be launched as a full-time programme. Once it is operational, participating

universities will turn attention to whether or not to pursue:

- (i) a part-time variant or,
- (ii) an adapted version such as an Executive MRPP.

Course Work:

- (a) Utilising a mix of uniform course content (common supporting materials and pedagogy across all universities) with localised course content (developed by teaching staff to ensure the programme is contextualised to each country in each university);
- (b) An approach to teaching that replaces 'chalk & talk' lectures with heavy use of:
 - . Participatory learning experiences;
 - . Interactive teaching tools;
 - . Group projects and assignments;
 - . Case study teaching.
- (c) E- learning materials will form an integral part of course delivery and provide an opportunity to bring international practices and experience into the classroom as well as enable students to interact across MRPP universities;
- (d) Use of visiting teaching staff and guest lecturers especially policy actors (e.g. from government and civil society, media, etc.) and researchers (e.g. from universities and think tanks); as well as collaboration across MRPP universities (i.e. joint courses, exchanges of teaching staff).

Workshops:

- . Organized learning opportunities to focus on 'soft' skills (e.g. IT, presentation skills, negotiation, communication) in the form of evening or weekend workshops rather than occupying valuable course time for such content.

Field experience:

- . To expose students to new and 'real world' environments and issues;
- . Related to each student's thesis topic;
- . Used to facilitate data collection/consultation;
- . A minimum duration of 6 weeks;
- . Host organisation provides supervision and potentially future employment opportunities (not necessarily for the individual who has the placement).

Thesis:

- . To demonstrate integration of learning experiences from course work, field experience and workshops.

Class Size

The MRPP will have a maximum class size of 25 (universities determine minimum class size); There will be a minimum cohort size of 15 (universities determine maximum cohort size). The 'cohort' refers to the number of students participating in the MRPP in any given year. If a total of 100 students are in a cohort, no more than 25 may be included in any single class.

Course Coding

All Master of Research and Public Policy course codes are four capital letters MRPP is followed by a course number consisting of three digits:

- . The first digit represents the graduate level of study.
- . The second digit is the type of course. Courses are indicated as follows:
 - . Foundation courses (F) 0
 - . Concentration courses (C) 1
 - . Thesis 2

. The third digit indicates the sequence

Examination Regulations

Student Assessment and Grading of Courses

The Steering Committee reached agreement on the need for some uniformity in student assessment. It was recognized that the MRPP entails learning experiences that do not lend themselves to grading on the basis of examinations in many cases. The adoption of innovative pedagogy requires a variety of assessment strategies whose weights cannot be determined prior to finalization of syllabi.

The syllabi will articulate course coverage, pedagogical strategies and modalities of capturing a variety of learning outcomes from: individual assignments; group projects; class presentations; role play; simulations; case studies; continuous assessments; and examinations. At this stage, assessment strategies that lend themselves to specific teaching and learning strategies will be clarified and weighted.

Student mode of assessment:

A combination of assessment mechanisms including:

- . Individual assignments;
- . Group projects;
- . Class presentations;
- . Role play;
- . Simulations;
- . Case studies;
- . Continuous assessments;
- . Examinations.

Credit Weighting and Graduation Requirements

Credits:

- . All courses will be weighted equally;
- . Each course will have 3 ° contact;± hours and 6 ° non-contact;± hours over a 15 week period;
- . Field experience will be equivalent to 1 course;
- . The number of credits for the thesis will be determined by each university.

Grading System

A description of the quality of work required to achieve particular grades on a scale.

C: Student academic progress. Mechanisms of mitigating failure as well as dealing with students who do not make sufficient academic progress. Decisions about the agreed approach to student assessment and grading of courses must be determined by the content and learning outcomes specific to each course, taking into account the practices of universities. Once the course design outlines are developed into syllabi, universities will consider and adopt a common approach to assessment and grading. This will occur after the approval process is complete. Outlined below are only preliminary considerations reflecting the need for harmonization of assessment and grading across all MRPP universities based on syllabi. The common framework will cover the following:

Student Assessment

A combination of assessment mechanisms including:

- (i) Individual assignments;
- (ii) Group projects;
- (iii) Class presentations;
- (iv) Role play;
- (v) Simulations;
- (vi) Case studies;
- (vii) Continuous assessment;
- (viii) Examinations.

Graduation Requirement To graduate, students must have taken/prepared and passed:

- (a) 10 \pm foundation courses;
- (b) 3 \pm concentration course electives;
- (c) For students in the research pathway . minimum of 2 research courses one of which must be either C1 or C2;
- (d) For students in the policy pathway . minimum of 2 policy courses one of which must be C3.
- (e) Thesis seminar;
- (f) Field experience;
- (g) Workshops (at least 3);
- (h) Thesis;
- (i) 1 or 2 additional electives (if required by the university).

Degree classification

Guidelines:

To ensure uniformity in approach to the MRPP thesis across all universities:

- . Thesis proposal approved at end of semester 2;
- . Preferably thesis supervision by primary and secondary advisor (at least 1 advisor from the MRPP programme);
- . Preferably thesis assessment (including oral defence) by 2 supervisors and moderated by an external examiner

The candidates will be expected to satisfy the Board of examiners with regard to the thesis/project as stipulated in the University rules and regulations.