



## Statement of Intent for a New Program

Proponent’s Contact Information	
New Program Name (degree and discipline):	<b>Master of Professional Education</b>
Academic Unit Proposing the Program:	<b>Department of Educational Studies</b>
Proposed Start Date:	<b>September 2026</b>
Submitted by:	<b>Dr. Michael Savage (on behalf of the Department of Educational Studies)</b>
Email:	<b>msavage@brocku.ca</b>
Date of Submission:	<b>May 19, 2023</b>

The Statement of Intent will reference the evaluation criteria for new programs (IQAP Section 3.5) as appropriate and shall include:

Description of the Proposed Program
Provide a description of the program, clearly stating the purpose, structure and pedagogical rationale, including an explanation of the proposed degree nomenclature.
<p>Professional masters degrees are primarily targeted at working professionals who are looking to advance their careers or who would like to become more marketable in their field. Unlike traditional masters degrees, professional masters degrees focus on honing experience and improving skill sets as opposed to learning theory and conducting traditional research. Typically, professional masters programs involve the completion of a capstone project that addresses a real-world professional issue, as opposed to completing a thesis, major research paper, or course-work. Although professional masters degrees have been available in various disciplines for a number of years, they are relatively new in the field of education.</p> <p>The reason for the increasing interest in master of professional education degrees is largely related to an increase in the value associated with educational programming across a variety of disciplines and in a variety of settings. Education has become a global policy priority. Business, government, non-profit agencies, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and healthcare agencies all strive to attract people who have a deep understanding of the field of educational studies (broadly defined) and who can lead, design and run educational workshops, programs, campaigns and interventions to meet their clients’ and employees’ needs. These entities seek to attract people who understand and can explain the broader context of education and are able to link it to some form of meaningful change.</p> <p>That is why the overarching goal of the proposed program is to prepare graduates who leverage their educational knowledge and skills to achieve innovative solutions for increasingly more complex problems in educational and other professional contexts. It has become imperative to equip educators and professionals across the discipline spectrum with the capacities to adapt to perpetual change and to affect positive perpetual change for the benefit of others. The proposed program recognizes, however, that this can be accomplished in a variety of ways and through targeted interest areas which is why it consists of three interdisciplinary fields of study.</p>

The first field of study, *Creating Happy, Healthy, Just Educational Spaces*, focuses on ensuring learning environments are safe and socially just spaces. This field of study is premised on the notion that it is crucial that learning environments and workplaces are accessible to all, inclusive and free from harassment, bullying and discrimination. This field of study will accomplish this through courses that focus on the promotion of healthy relationships, the principles of positive psychology, and the encouragement of student advocacy through a social justice and anti-oppressive lens.

The second field of study, *Living and Learning in a Connected World*, focuses on digital innovation and learning in multimodal contexts. It teaches students to take risks, to use innovative technologies and to develop their social learning networks to critically address educational and professional issues. This field of study promotes graduates to make a difference in their profession by helping others navigate the complexities of living and thriving in the highly connected multimodal world.

The third field of study, *Educational Leadership for People, Planet and Prosperity*, focuses on ways that leaders can respond to the myriad challenges facing the world by fostering life-sustaining and life-serving approaches to collective wellbeing for humans and the more-than-human world. Sustainability is the purpose of education, so this field of study aims to promote education broadly defined as a force to create harmonious, sustainable relationships between people, planet and economic systems.

As the program being proposed is a Master of Professional Education (MPed) degree program, primarily being marketed to working educational professionals, it is designed to be delivered entirely asynchronously online in order to be maximally flexible. It will be delivered over two years and include six semesters. The program is composed of five credits distributed through six courses. Two courses, MPED 5F01 (Practice-based Research) and MPED 5L95 (Capstone Project), are required in all three fields of study. Each field of study then consists of four required courses that are specific to that field of study. See Appendix A for the proposed course sequence for each field of study in the program.

Descriptions of the new proposed courses are below:

**MPED 5F01- Practice-based Research**

Examines practice-based research and modes of inquiry including participatory research, applied research, community-based research, program development and evaluation, and collaborative research. Promotes critical reflection and research and information literacy.

**MPED 5P01 - Promoting a Positive Educational Climate**

Explores the importance of implementing and sustaining comprehensive policies and practices that promote mental wellness and cognitive, social, and emotional competencies to create positive educational spaces.

**MPED 5P02 - Anti-Oppression Education**

Examines oppression in the forms of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and transphobia in order to develop strategies for addressing and preventing prejudice in all its forms.

**MPED 5P03 - Developing Resilient Individuals**

Explores the concepts of resiliency, flourishing and trauma and how they apply to the lives of educators and students. Focuses on developing, implementing, and sustaining effective resilience supports across diverse educational settings and contexts.

**MPED 5P04 - Fostering Advocacy and Community**

Analyzes issues pertaining to advocacy and activism. Explores strategies to honor student engagement and promote leadership in advocacy efforts.

**MPED 5P30 - Literacies for all Learners**

Examines how literacies emerge through everyday practices and facilitate how we make meaning in and of the world. Explores educational frameworks for addressing social issues, inequities, and futures through literacies.

**MPED 5P31 - Leading in a Connected World**

Examines the nature of social networks, digital citizenship and the complexities of leadership in a highly connected world. Explores ways to combine high quality teaching and learning with safe and ethical use of technology and with a careful consideration and critique of the issues facing the world.

**MPED 5P32 - Innovative Technologies for Education**

Examines frameworks for teaching and learning through various technologies. Topics may include AI, coding, game-based learning, gamification, makerspaces, and emerging technologies.

**MPED 5P33 - Interdisciplinary Learning and Technology**

Examines digital pedagogies and strategies for designing and leading interdisciplinary and technology-rich learning, assessment, and evaluation. Explores flexible and innovative curriculum designs that include appropriate access to technology and digital learning environments.

**MPED 5P60 - Educational Leadership for Sustainability**

Examines the relationships among global environmental, social, and economic factors and provides understanding of the UNESCO sustainability development goals (SDGs). Focuses on educational leadership that supports the development of sustainability competencies that empower individuals towards inquiry and action in their communities.

**MPED 5P61 - Poverty, Inequality and Anti-poverty Education**

Critically analyzes poverty and inequality with a focus on measurement, processes of production and perpetuation, and educational and public policy responses. Examines competing perspectives on the causes of poverty and inequality and educational initiatives aimed at a sustainable and socially just planet.

**MPED 5P62 - Ecological Educational Leadership**

Examines theoretical and experiential approaches to ecological learning while interrogating nature/culture. Explores synergies between ecological leadership, human and planetary health, well-being and community engagement.

**MPED 5P63 - Transformative Education for Sustainability**

Explores the theories and practices of transformative learning to promote learning communities and ecosystems that help foster sustainability resilience (prevention, mitigation, adaptation). Examines ways of transforming how we relate to each other, to the environment, and to the future.

**MPED 5L95 - Capstone Project**

Engage in a practice-based research project that involves sustained reflection on how to address a problem in their professional practice related to the themes they learned in the program.

Master of Professional Education (MPEd) was chosen as the degree nomenclature to make it consistent with the other master of professional education degrees already being offered in Ontario.

The program will be governed by the Master of Education (MEd) Graduate Program Director and the MEd Graduate Program Committee of the Department of Educational Studies.

Explain how the proposed program fits with the University's strategic plan.

The proposed Master of Professional Education (MPEd) program corresponds to Brock University's strategic directions in the following specific ways:

- 1) The proposed program is consistent with and advances all four strategic priorities set forth in Brock University's Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-2025. The program is being designed to offer a transformational and accessible academic university experience, which is the first strategic priority in the Plan. Specifically, the proposed program will help the university meet the first goal under this strategic priority by providing and delivering a high-quality program that meets the interests and needs of students and that will support them to achieve their career goals and potential in life. As the program is designed to be delivered entirely asynchronously online the program is accessible to a much wider range of people who are not able to relocate and attend on campus programs. This dramatically increases the accessibility of the program to international students who do not require a study permit and who do not need to move to Canada to engage in the program. The flexible nature of the program also allows working professionals to continue to work while they complete their degree, increasing even further the accessibility of the program. The proposed program is also consistent with the Plan's second strategic priority to build research capacity across the university. The proposed Master of Professional Education BA in Educational Studies program aims to develop competencies in consuming and creating research to solve authentic problems of practice. The program's experientially-based scholar-practitioner model ensures these problem-based research competencies are infused throughout the entire program. Enhancing the life and vitality of our local region and beyond, the Strategic Plan's third strategic priority, is also being advanced through this proposed program. Specifically, the proposed program will help the University attain the first goal under this strategic priority by increasing and enhancing enriching opportunities for students to engage with the community by integrating project-based learning, practice-based research competencies and an experiential capstone experience directly into the proposed program. The proposed program will also contribute to Brock advancing the second goal under this strategic priority, to support regional economic, social and cultural vitality, by increasing access to a program that is in high demand from students and by society. The proposed program will increase the employability of graduates by preparing educational professionals in the broad field of education for leadership positions within a wide variety of organizations. Finally, the proposed Master of Professional Education will foster a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation, and decolonization, the fourth strategic priority in the Plan, by delivering a proposed program that focuses on education as a mechanism for social and personal change.
- 2) The proposed program also aligns well with the current Strategic Mandate Agreement between Brock University and the Province of Ontario (2020-2025). In the current Strategic Mandate Agreement Brock University is committed to offering a broad array of curricular and co-curricular experiential learning opportunities.

This proposed program integrates experiential learning directly through its required project-based learning, problem-based research competencies rooted in practice and a project-based capstone course. Additionally, one of the proposed program's aims is to enhance individuals' health and wellbeing through educational initiatives, which is Brock University's institutional strength and focus. This proposed program will further increase Brock's strength in this vital area by establishing a professional graduate degree which prepares educational leaders to implement health and wellbeing educational initiatives in a wide variety of organizations and communities.

- 3) The proposed program aligns with all five of the priorities outlined in Brock University's Academic Plan (2023-2028). Specifically, the Master of Professional Education, through its integrated experiential components that tie directly to students' professional practice, aligns with the Plan's Priority #1 Action c (review and support the expansion of innovative experiential learning opportunities across the campus to ensure that all Brock students are involved in engaging experiences that foster critical reflection on their personal and professional growth), and h (Expand graduate experiential learning opportunities such as in-course offerings, global exchanges, and industry-based work-integrated learning experiences). The proposed program also aligns with Priority 2 as the proposed program's flexible asynchronous online delivery and one course per semester structure will be the most accessible program delivery option available at the university if it is approved. The proposed program will help the university pursue Priority 3, action f (design supports and opportunities for non-traditional learners, including working adults and those with parental responsibilities, to ensure they are well-prepared for success) as working educational professionals are the program's key target population and the flexible delivery model was deliberately designed to allow them to engage in graduate studies while still continuing to work full-time and support their other life responsibilities. The proposed program's flexible delivery model and focus on education as a catalyst for societal change aligns with Priority 4 actions a (review and modernize Brock's core and context credits system to prioritize breadth and maximize opportunities for student exposure to themes in equity, diversity, inclusion, social justice, sustainability and global justice), g (identify and work to dismantle systemic academic barriers experienced by BIPOC, disabled, 2SLGBTQ+, and gender-diverse faculty, staff, and students and develop supports and community that foster inclusive participation and belonging, and that support flourishing) and h (implement the relevant recommendations of the post-secondary education standards development committee for new accessibility education standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)). Finally, the proposed program aligns specifically with Priority 5 actions b (expand career education to help learners understand and articulate the links between their education and their career goals in order to support reflection and decision-making about future career and/or academic pathways) and c (further develop curriculum-based opportunities for students to translate their academic knowledge and discipline-specific skills into core competencies expressed in language that is meaningful to employers).
- 4) The proposed Master of Professional Education aligns with all of the priorities in the Faculty of Education's Strategic Plan 2019-2024 including putting students first, striving for diversity, inclusion/reconciliation and decolonization, promoting a culture of scholarship and research, building community and international partnerships and sustaining the faculty. It also meets the Faculty's stated objectives to expand Master of Education pathways and expand online learning opportunities for students, particularly at the graduate level.

**Details of Resource Implications**

Provide details of the existing and new resources (human, physical and budgetary) required to mount the program.

The governance and administrative structure for the proposed program are already in place. The MEd Graduate Program Committee and MEd Graduate Program Director will provide the academic and administrative oversight for the proposed program. The Department of Educational Studies has a dedicated, full-time Graduate Student Coordinator and a dedicated full-time Graduate Program Administrative Assistant to assist with program administration. Faculty members with experience teaching graduate courses and with expertise in the proposed program's content areas are already in the Department of Educational Studies. The Department of Educational Studies also has dedicated IT support and faculty members who are familiar with setting up and running online asynchronous courses as the Department already runs two asynchronous online programs (BA in Adult Education and Bachelor of Early Childhood Education)

No additional human, physical or budgetary resources are required to mount the program.

**Evidence of Consultation with Affected Academic Units**

Include the results of any consultation with other units that will be impacted by the proposed program.

Include evidence indicating the extent to which any participating Department(s)/Centre(s) is prepared to contribute to the proposed program.

No other units are affected by the proposed program.

**Evidence of Consultation Regarding Space Needs for the Proposed Program**

Include the results of any consultation with the Advisory Committee on Space regarding the space needs for the proposed program.

As this is a fully online program no additional space on campus (e.g. classrooms) is required.

**Evidence of Student Demand, including projected enrollments**

Only two programs that specifically refer to themselves as a Master of Professional Education exist in Canada. Both are asynchronously delivered online programs. The yearly enrolment in the Master of Professional Education program at Western University is approximately 750 students while the yearly enrolment for Queen's University's Professional Master of Education is approximately the same. This indicates a very healthy demand for online Master of Professional Education programs and indicates the market is not yet saturated.

Furthermore, HolonIQ, a research and analytics company, states that the online degree market is one of the fastest-growing segments of global higher education. It projects that the online degree market will generate \$74 billion dollars in US currency by 2025, which is over double what the online degree market generated in 2019 (\$36 billion in US currency).

Further evidence of the demand for online graduate programs in education come from our own MEd program. With little lead-time and no formal marketing, our synchronous online Adult Education cohort, received 33 complete applications from qualified applicants for its 15 spots.

As a result of the above we are proposing an initial conservative target of 60 students (20 students in each of the three fields of study) per year for the proposed program. This will result in 120 students in the program across both years at any one time.

#### Evidence of Societal Need

Now, more than ever, society needs professionals who are capable of critically integrating new knowledge and skills into their own ways of knowing and are then able to teach that knowledge and skills in meaningful ways to others effectively and efficiently to enact change and growth within organizations. The proposed Master of Professional Education is designed to provide educational professionals in a wide variety of contexts with the advanced leadership, curriculum development and pedagogical skills required to do exactly that. The proposed degree is sufficiently broad-based and interdisciplinary so as to offer a plethora of career possibilities and career advancement. Jobs such as designing and providing programming to children/youth/senior citizens, providing jobs and skills training to people who are changing careers, designing, organizing, and leading public campaigns, working as learning strategists, providing training or professional development opportunities, working with refugees endeavouring to acclimate to Canada, working as a financial aid counselor or social service worker etc. People with these skills also are needed to design and run programs in early childhood education centres, social service agencies, correctional facilities, mental health centers and other organizational contexts. There are opportunities for individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit to start their own educational consulting businesses or non-profit agencies. There are opportunities for individuals with this degree to engage with government and policy makers to help guide policy initiatives. There are also opportunities for current classroom and postsecondary instructors to enhance their skills and move into leadership positions upon obtaining this degree.

#### Duplicative Similarities

Provide evidence that any duplicative similarities to existing programs, internally, provincially or nationally, are justifiable for reasons of public funding.

In the field of education, a traditional Master of Education (MEd) degree, like the one we offer in the Department of Educational Studies, focuses on theories and research on how people learn while a Master of Professional Education (MPEd) focuses on how to best put those theories to work in educational settings. Additionally, the focus of a MPEd degree is not on novel contributions to the literature (as is the often the case with a traditional MEd degree), but rather on the application of educational theory to problems of practice or to the design of new workplace educational programs. These are important distinctions.

As noted previously, there are only two Masters of Professional Education programs in Canada. Both of them are in Ontario. Both are delivered completely asynchronously online and typically take two years to complete. One is at the University of Western Ontario and one is at Queen's University.

Unlike the program being proposed, Western's Master of Professional Education is very disciplinary focused. There are 10 fields of study to choose from including Applied Behaviour Analysis; Curriculum and Pedagogy; Early Childhood Education; Educational Leadership; Leadership in Indigenous Education; Equity, Diversity and Social Justice; Mathematics Education; Teaching Students with Exceptionalities; Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages; and Global and International Education. It provides students with well-defined disciplinary skills and knowledge so they can advance their careers in very specific areas in the field of education.

Very similar to Western's program, Queen's university's Master of Professional Education program focus on very specific skills and knowledge. Unlike Western's program, however,

Queen's program offers a choice of six fields of study (which they refer to as concentrations). Three of their fields of study have a disciplinary focus (e.g. Educational Administration; Global Education; Indigenous Education) very similar to Western's fields of study. Unlike Western's, however, three of Queen's fields of study focus on specific educational skills (e.g. Assessment and Evaluation; Curriculum Specialist; Literacy Education). Like Western's degree, Queen's degree prepares students for careers in very specific areas in the field of education.

What sets the proposed program apart from the programs at both Western and Queen's is its deliberate interdisciplinary focus. All three of the fields of study are designed to provide knowledge and skill enhancement in very broad interdisciplinary areas that can be applied to *all* educational settings, no matter how you define what an educational setting is. The advantage this provides to students is it allows for career enhancement both within specific educational settings they may currently be in (which is the focus of both Western and Queen's degrees) *and* across educational settings so they may move to a different educational setting in the future. An interdisciplinary focus also allows graduates to infuse different ideas, skills and perspectives into the disciplinary area they are currently working in, allowing for more flexible, critical and creative problem-solving.

In conclusion, there are currently very few Master of Professional Education degree programs in Canada. Despite this, the program being proposed here is in many ways unique in terms of its interdisciplinary foci and therefore offers a unique educational experience.

#### Decanal Comments

Include certification from the relevant Dean(s) that the new degree/major is an appropriate and desirable addition to the academic programs of the University and is in line with the strategic direction of the Faculty. As well a clear commitment that the new program will be appropriately resourced. For undergraduate programs, the relevant Dean(s) shall be the Dean(s) of the Faculty within which the program resides. For graduate programs, the appropriate Deans shall be both the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Dean(s) of the relevant Faculty or Faculties.

Please see the attached letter of support from the Dean, Faculty of Education and the Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies.



To: Dr Michael Savage

From: Mary-Louise Vanderlee, Interim Dean Faculty of Education

Date: May 19, 2023

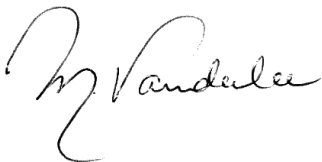
Subject: Statement of Intent for a Master of Professional Education (MPed)

I support the Statement of Intent for a proposed Master of Professional Education program.

Contained within a letter from Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister of Education (April 17, 2023), Ontario Deans of Education have been invited to work with the Ontario College of teachers to consider how to include a core focus on proficiencies in areas such as special education, use of technology for teaching, as well as student mental health in teacher education programs. More recently (May 8, 2023), the public Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) called for in professional development and research to enhance the knowledge base of in-service educators regarding mental health literacy and promotion of positive school climate including affinity spaces. Also occurring are the cross-sector discussions with the Deans of Faculties of Education, Teacher's Federations, Ontario College of Teachers, and other partner organizations provincially and beyond. All are raising concerns that underscore the urgent need to provide in-service professional development essential for building individual capacity while considering the diverse and often divisive world views that impact student success and educators mental health and wellbeing.

I believe the proposed new courses will address not only the currently expressed concerns but the new and emergent trends While the identified fields of specialization are interesting and feasible, I do hope that further consultation across the university will generate possibilities for additional collaborative options resulting in a highly desirable program that appeals to a wide range of practicing educators.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mary-Louise Vanderlee

To: Dr Michael Savage  
Copies to: Dr Catherine Hands, Dr Mary-Louise Vanderlee, Dr Brian Power  
From: Suzanne Curtin, Vice Provost & Dean Graduate Studies  
Date: May 19, 2023  
Subject: Statement of Intent for a Master of Professional Education (MPEd)

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The Faculty of Graduate Studies has reviewed the Statement of Intent for a proposed Master of Professional Education, and is pleased to extend its support for the proposal to proceed to the public consultation stage of the program proposal process.

While the existing Master of Education focuses on theory and research, the proposed Master of Professional Education is designed with working professionals in mind, with greater emphasis on the application of theory and research to areas of professional practice. The program culminates in a capstone project designed to allow participants the opportunity to examine in-depth the issues relevant to their individual professional contexts. The proposed MPEd therefore serves to complement existing graduate programming within the Faculty of Education.

The fully-online program format has the potential to reach a wide target audience, beyond those able to commute or relocate to the Niagara region. Furthermore, the asynchronous nature of the program will appeal to the target demographic of working professionals, as the flexible program design will allow participants to balance the demands of work and family with their graduate coursework.

The proposed MPEd proposes three cross-disciplinary fields of specialization:

- Creating Happy, Healthy, Just Educational Spaces
- Living and Learning in a Connected World
- Educational Leadership for People, Planet and Prosperity

While the pedagogical and thematic rationale for the three fields of specialization is sound, we would encourage proponents to give further consideration to the specialization titles to ensure they would be attractive to students and appropriate for inclusion on formal degree parchments. Proponents are therefore advised to consult broadly on specialization titles at the Program Proposal Brief (PPB) stage.

At the PPB stage we would additionally suggest consulting with units from across the University whose disciplinary expertise may inform or enhance the curriculum of the proposed specializations (e.g. the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre (ESRC), those involved in teaching and research in Social Justice and Equity Studies (SJES), etc.).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne Curtin".

Dr Suzanne Curtin

### Appendix A: Master of Professional Education (MPed) Course Sequence

<b>Time</b>	<b>Creating Happy, Healthy, Just Educational Spaces</b>	<b>Living and Learning in a Connected World</b>	<b>Educational Leadership for People, Planet, and Prosperity</b>
Year 1, Fall Semester	MPED 5P01 (0.5 credit) Promoting a Positive Educational Climate	MPED 5P30 (0.5 credit) Literacies for all Learners	MPED 5P60 (0.5 credit) Educational Leadership for Sustainability
Year 1, Winter Semester	MPED 5P02 (0.5 credit) Anti-Oppression Education	MPED 5P31 (0.5 credit) Leading in a Connected World	MPED 5P61 (0.5 credit) Poverty, Inequality, and Anti- poverty Education
Year 1, Spring Semester	MPED 5F01 (1.0 credit) Practice-Based Research	MPED 5F01 (1.0 credit) Practice-Based Research	MPED 5F01 (1.0 credit) Practice-Based Research
Year 2, Fall Semester	MPED 5P03 (0.5 credit) Developing Resilient Individuals	MPED 5P32 (0.5 credit) Innovative Technologies for Education	MPED 5P62 (0.5 credit) Ecological Educational Leadership
Year 2, Winter Semester	MPED 5P04 (0.5 credit) Fostering Advocacy and Community	MPED 5P33 (0.5 credit) Interdisciplinary Learning and Technology	MPED 5P63 (0.5 credit) Transformative Education for Sustainability
Year 2, Spring Semester	MPED 5L95 (2.0 credits) Capstone Project	MPED 5L95 (2.0 credits) Capstone Project	MPED 5L95 (2.0 credits) Capstone Project