



OnLine focus

July/August 2015

In this issue:

- Spotlight on Carleton's New Graduate Programs in [Indigenous Policy and Administration](#)
- Carleton's Master's in [Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership: An Insider's View](#)
- [MOOC](#) as a Stepping Stone
- [Tales](#) from the Field
- CUOL Exam [Schedules](#)

Spotlight on Carleton's New Graduate Programs in Indigenous Policy and Administration

Professor Frances Abele gives an insider's look at Carleton's new IPA programs.



As Carleton's School of Public Policy and Administration launches two graduate diplomas in Indigenous Policy and Administration (IPA) and an MA in Public Administration with an IPA Concentration, program supervisor Frances Abele recalls the road leading up to the launch.

Abele and a team of colleagues began developing the programs about two years ago and took a unique approach. They hired Tracy Coates, a lawyer who specializes in cross-cultural strategies, to meet with communities and stakeholders as part of a

seven-month engagement process to gain insights on program design and curriculum.

“We are offering a program that has no precedent in Canada,” explains Abele. “It is a satisfying, interesting, exciting and kind of risky endeavour.”

As part of the feedback received during the engagement process, a program Advisory Circle of leaders in the field of Indigenous policy and administration was established. Members include leaders from national and local Indigenous organizations and others who have knowledge of the educational needs in the field.

Abele calls the role of advisors a “distinctive” element of the development process. She says the program developers are working to build long-term relationships with Indigenous governments, organizations and communities to attract students, improve curriculum, and make it easier for the program’s graduates to find jobs.

The graduate diploma is offered mainly online and through part-time study. Abele says the goal is to design a course load that suits a variety of schedules.

“We are trying our best to make the courses accessible to people who are employed or who have heavy family responsibilities that prevent them from relocating for full-time university study,” she says.

Graduate students at Carleton studying in a different program also have the option of pursuing the new IPA graduate diploma. Abele says these students can add the diploma to their course of study.

The online component of the IPA programs, operating through cuLearn, helps make these new programs accessible to students across the country.

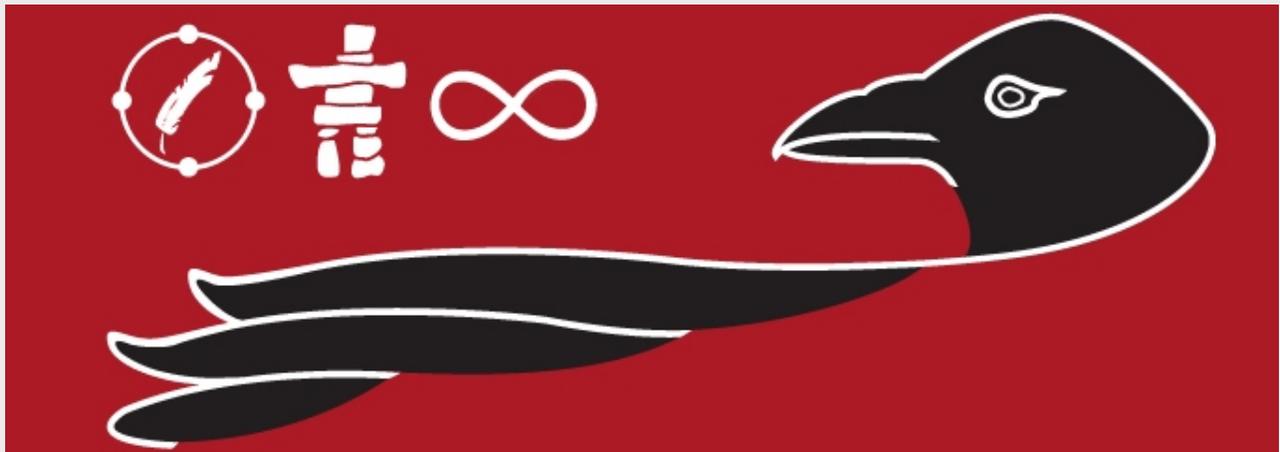
“Since we hope to engage students from all over Canada, including northern Ontario, the northern parts of other provinces, and the territories, we are glad to be able to offer them an equal opportunity to study alongside students who happen to live closer to universities,” says Abele.

At present, Abele says she is working to help develop research collaborations with several organizations and governments in Carleton’s neighbourhood.

“We are learning about their needs through research, developing curriculum for our courses, and building the relationships with people in the organizations that will help us as we develop the IPA,” she says.

The new IPA graduate programs will be evaluated every year, says Abele adding that she hopes to use students’ experiences to help improve the program.

“I know that we will continuously improve our methods and that the students will help us learn how to teach online better and better.”



[GO TO TOP](#)

Carleton's Master's in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership: An Insider's View

A Carleton professor reflects on her role in developing the program

Since its inception three years ago, Paloma Raggo says students have praised the flexibility of the online component of Carleton’s Master’s in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership (MPNL) program, and the challenging nature of its courses.



Raggo, the program’s acting supervisor, has played a central role in developing MPNL's online courses. She says one of the goals of adding an online component to an existing program was to meet students’ different learning needs.

“The idea was to make sure that students could go at their own

pace, according to their own schedules,” Raggo explains.

For a research methods course she designed, Raggo divided the course into subject areas, or “modules.” Students had to successfully complete a quiz on assigned readings to unlock a mini-lecture for each module. Raggo says she hoped shorter lectures would help keep students interested.

While there is a strong online component to the program, it is not delivered entirely online. Students spend time in intensive summer sessions as well.

Designing courses for the program was a challenging endeavour, Raggo admits. The program is the first of its kind in Canada, so there weren’t any models to refer to, but Raggo says it was a valuable experience.

“For me, this has helped me think creatively and think outside the box about how this should be done,” she explains. “It’s a challenge I like.”

Raggo says she modifies the structure of her courses to ensure she meets both students’ needs and her teaching goals.

“The challenge with an online formula is to have students participate at their own pace,” says Raggo, “but I think that the key message is to really figure out what you want students to learn and what type of course you are teaching.”

Raggo’s efforts working on the online courses were recognized in 2014 when she received an Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award after her first year as a member of Carleton’s faculty.

Ultimately, Raggo says she feels Carleton’s MPNL program is a success. In her view, a key indicator of the program’s success is students’ belief that the program is challenging, because she says online courses and programs are often stereotyped as “easy.”

“It’s a tough program and I’m proud that people say that,” she says. “From the feedback we’ve got and from the interest we’ve gotten across the country, we’re here to stay for a long time.”



MOOC as a Stepping Stone



Erika Veillette never went to university. After graduating from high school she spent some time cleaning houses before getting a job as a secretary in the psychiatry ward at the Ottawa General Hospital.

“I’ve always wanted to do more,” said Veillette. “I want to help people and listen to their problems.”

Veillette wanted to take psychology courses, but balancing work and responsibilities at home while going to class was going to be a serious challenge.

In searching for something that would meet her needs, Veillette came across Carleton’s first massive open online course.

Now, at 31 years old, Veillette has completed her first ever university course with the intention of one day changing careers. And she did it entirely online.

Massive open online courses, or MOOCs, are changing the way students can access university education.

Offered exclusively online, they give students a chance to learn at their convenience. Lecture modules are recorded and tests and exams are all taken online. Students interact with teaching assistants or professors through various online tools.

MOOCs also offer students the chance to try out the course for free, before opting to earn a credit and pay tuition.

Dr. Bruce Tsuji is the man behind Carleton's MOOC. He saw MOOCs as a great opportunity to provide different kinds of learners with the chance to take university courses.

When a provincial grant of \$75,000 was announced to fund the development of online courses, Tsuji and a couple of his colleagues submitted a proposal for two first-year psychology courses and won.

“Our idea going in was that we’re dealing with a very very diverse student population,” said Tsuji. “People whose first language is not English, people who have different kinds of reading or learning disabilities, people who just, by virtue of whatever is going on with them, might employ different kinds of learning mechanisms.”

Another target group? People who live too far away to take face-to-face courses.

Sarah McGregor was working as a journalist in Nairobi, Kenya when she first came across Carleton's online psychology course.

"You know, the one worry I had in my mind was am I going to be able to...figure out all the moving parts of how to take the exam and access the lectures and combine the course work with the readings and the lectures...[but the] recordings that you watched were just perfect," said McGregor.

"Professor Tsuji was so responsive via Twitter and email and various other social media methods that I didn't feel like if I don't figure this out then I'm going to be stranded here in Africa all by myself."

Simple convenience is another factor attracting students.

Hala Ayoub needed to take a psychology course to help reach her goal of taking the MCAT and going to medical school. She found Carleton's MOOC and loved the flexibility it offered.

"At the beginning this got me a little nervous because I'm a person who likes to go to class, if I don't know something I like to ask immediately...but then I thought, it seems convenient, so let me give it a try. And I liked it."

She's now recommended it to her sister, who has enrolled in the social work program at Carleton.

MOOCs are not without their critics. A *New York Times* article revealed that a huge number of students taking MOOCs failed to complete the courses. A study done by researchers at MIT and Harvard showed that only 24 per cent of 1.7 million participants earned certificates at the end of their courses. To some, these numbers show that MOOCs are ineffective, but Tsuji has facilitated three semesters of the online courses so far and his data show something much different.

"Because this is a bit of an experiment...we spent a lot of time making sure, checking on the kinds of stats that would tell us that we're on the right track or we're on the wrong track or we have to change something," said Tsuji.

Universities use three key statistics to measure the effectiveness of their courses: student evaluations, the number of Ds, failures and withdrawals from the course, and the overall student marks.

"What's great is that students' evaluations of this online course were identical or just a tiny little bit above my face-to-face versions of the same course," said Tsuji.

“The DFW rate is comparable to other intro psych face-to-face courses at Carleton... and I see the same pattern...no significant difference...when I compare the number of As, Bs, Cs and Ds students are getting in this online course.”

It is also gratifying when the data reveals that Carleton’s MOOCs are more accessible than Harvard’s, said Tsuji. With closed-captioning, the ability to adjust exams for those who require more time, screen magnifiers, adjustable playback speed, and volunteer note takers, these courses are far superior to Harvard’s in terms of the variety of different learning styles and student abilities they support.

“This is not a second best, this is comparable to what we do in the classroom,” Tsuji said.

For Erika Veillette, Carleton’s MOOC gave her the confidence to try taking more university-level courses.

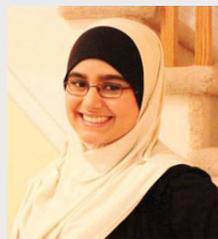
“I was really proud of myself,” said Veillette. “I’m proud that working full time I was still able to do one class...I really did enjoy it.”

If you are interested in Carleton’s PSYC 1001 MOOC, go to [eCarleton](#) to learn more.

[GO TO TOP](#)

Tales from the Field: How CUOL Helped Four Students Achieve Their Academic Goals

When four different Carleton students reflect on their experiences taking classes through Carleton University OnLine, they each convey a common message: CUOL is a convenient tool that gives students the freedom to study on their own schedules.

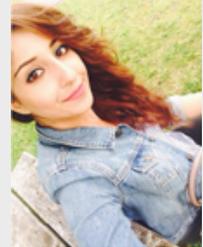


For aerospace engineering student **Warda Alavi**, taking a video on demand course through CUOL was a means for her to study a subject she was interested in while fulfilling an elective requirement for her degree. When she learned there were limited seats in the Natural Disasters course she wanted to take, Alavi decided to enrol in the online version of EARTH 2415. She praises the flexible nature of a CUOL course.

“CUOL is the most flexible form of lecture available, and it can be used by a variety of students with a variety of needs,” says Alavi. “Students may have unexpected situations arise in their lives, such as doctor’s appointments [and] family emergencies, and CUOL is a great tool to use to catch up on missed lectures.”

Sumiyya Khan says she agrees that the flexibility of CUOL is a valuable asset for students leading busy lives. Khan has just completed her bachelor's degree in political science and communication studies and says she performed better on midterms and exams for CUOL courses than her on-campus classes. She explains that CUOL's video on demand classes matched her personal learning style better than than traditional, live lectures.

"CUOL personally was not like an 8:30 a.m. class for me where I had to force myself to get out of bed, go to campus and stay awake and focused throughout the lecture given by my professor," says Khan. "Instead CUOL allowed me to stay in bed and watch the lectures at the tips of my fingers."



The service enabled Khan to remain on the track towards graduation. She recalls the struggle of trying to achieve her academic goals without the help of CUOL.

"Being a fourth year student with the goal of completing my degree on time, I was put into a challenging situation where it became crucial for me to take an additional course but I was unable to come up with a solution to solve this issue," recalls Khan. A peer suggested that Khan consider classes offered through CUOL, which led her to register in PSYC 1001.

"If it were not for the CUOL course that I took this past winter term, my graduation would have been delayed further," says Khan. "CUOL allowed me to conveniently complete the additional credit required for my degree and made it possible for me to achieve my academic goals."

Sam Dewhurst is another student who says CUOL helped him achieve his educational goals. Dewhurst, who is majoring in history, says his video on demand classes saved him hours of time required to commute to campus, which gave him more time to focus on coursework. However, Dewhurst says the opportunity to watch lectures on demand can open the door to the temptation of procrastinating until an exam approaches. He recommends that students watch lectures within the same week that they are delivered on campus.

"I love the flexibility, but with great power comes great responsibility," he warns.



Waleed Faisal, a political science student at Carleton, also highlights the responsibility of watching lectures within a reasonable time frame before exams. Faisal enrolled in CUOL courses while working full-time, because the lecture schedule clashes with his work schedule.

"CUOL is a great facility in today's technology-driven society," he says.

Looking toward the future, Faisal says he hopes to see more courses made available through CUOL. He also expresses a desire to continue taking classes through the service.

The four students agree that whether you're living on campus or working full-time from a remote location, all students can benefit from the flexibility of taking CUOL courses.

[GO TO TOP](#)

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