

WICKED PROBLEM COURSE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals are now being accepted for new or adapted courses oriented around a societal ‘wicked problem.’

Background, guidelines, additional information, and a proposal template are provided below. Substantial support is available for course development and delivery.

All questions should be directed to Vice-Provost Sandra Gabriele at vpitl@concordia.ca.

Proposals are due March 1, 2019.



DOUBLE
OUR
RESEARCH



TEACH
FOR
TOMORROW



GET YOUR
HANDS
DIRTY



MIX
IT UP



EXPERIMENT
BOLDLY



GROW
SMARTLY



EMBRACE
THE CITY,
EMBRACE
THE WORLD



GO
BEYOND



TAKE
PRIDE

BACKGROUND

Wicked problems are highly complex societal challenges where there is little consensus around the nature of the problem; where causes, effects, and interdependencies are difficult to disentangle; and where existing methods, processes and policies to address the problem have proven inadequate. Wicked problems, by their very nature, need to be understood and addressed from the perspective of multiple disciplines, and with collaboration between multiple stakeholders.¹

For the purposes of this call, wicked problem courses are team-taught courses focused on these complex societal challenges, with embedded transdisciplinary projects undertaken in collaboration with community, industry, and/or government partners. These partners might define issues or challenges that courses can be built around, collaborate with faculty and students on a course project, and/or participate in reviews of projects at the end of a course.

The objective of offering wicked problem courses is to provide students with high-impact forms of experiential, collaborative, and transdisciplinary learning that integrates theoretical understanding and practical experience.

- Experiential—oriented around a project that involves students in concrete action.
- Collaborative—developed with external collaborators who help shape the course.
- Transdisciplinary—led by faculty from different backgrounds working jointly on a course that blends and integrates discipline-specific approaches.

Confronting wicked problems in a structured learning environment helps to cultivate the kinds of skills and dispositions that students will need in their roles as professionals and citizens.

This call is being issued by the Office of the Provost as part of the Next-Generation Learning Project, with support from Strategic Directions funds. The Next-Gen Learning Project launches experiments and pilots that help realize the aspiration to “teach for tomorrow.”

¹ The term “wicked problems” is attributed to Horst Rittel, design theorist and professor of design methodology at the Ulm School of Design, Germany. See Rittel’s 1973 article “[Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning.](#)”

For a useful primer on wicked problems and strategies to address them, see “[Tackling wicked problems: A public policy perspective](#)” from the Australian Public Service Commission.

GUIDELINES

- FACULTY TEAMS** Three teams of two faculty members each will be selected to develop and deliver wicked problem courses.
- Faculty team members should be from different academic units. Preference will be given to teams with members from different Faculties.
- For this call, team members must be full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty.
- COURSE PARAMETERS** Wicked problem courses will be 3-credit courses.
- Enrolments will be capped at 25 students.
- Courses should be targeted at advanced undergraduate and graduate students.
- Intensive or other kinds of alternative format courses are possible and encouraged.
- Faculty teams will have the opportunity to offer their course a second time if the course is successful and the faculty team agrees to deliver it.
- COURSE DESIGN** Courses must be project-based, engaging students in some kind of action or intervention related to the selected wicked problem.
- Projects should be multi-disciplinary in nature, requiring complementary sets of skills and abilities among participating students.
- Engaging students and external partners in course and project design is strongly encouraged, and facilitation for co-design work is available.
- Substantial support for course design and partnership development is available (see the Support section below).
- WORKLOAD CREDIT** Participating faculty will each receive 1.5 credits for teaching the course each time that it is offered. Courses will be weighted at 3-credits.

TIMING OF COURSE OFFERINGS

The first of a team's wicked problem courses should be offered during the 2020 summer session at the latest. Earlier offerings are possible if faculty teams are available and the relevant department chairs and deans approve the timing.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Mixing students with distinct but complementary disciplinary backgrounds and skill sets is vital to the success of wicked problem courses. Therefore, faculty teams should design courses with student recruitment in mind. Tailoring a wicked problem course to fit program requirements for capstone, thesis, or final year projects are possible ways to maximize student interest.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Faculty teams must submit their proposals by **March 1, 2019** using the provided template.

Faculty team members will need to have their proposals approved by their department chairs prior to submitting them for consideration. By signing the proposals, department chairs agree to adjust the teaching assignments of participating faculty members should their proposal be accepted. Instructions are included with the template.

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Initial reviews of proposals will be done by a committee that includes the following individuals:

- Sandra Gabriele, Vice-Provost Innovation in Teaching and Learning
- Nadia Bhuiyan, Vice-Provost Partnerships and Experiential Learning
- Rob Cassidy, Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning
- Two faculty members or associate deans appointed by Faculty deans

Initial reviews may include phone conversations or meetings with faculty teams to discuss their proposals. Final decisions on proposals will be taken by the review committee in consultation with the relevant Faculty deans and department chairs. Dean and chair approval is necessary for selected proposals to proceed into the course development stage.

Proposals will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- Pedagogical value of the proposed course project
- Complementarity and integration of different disciplinary methods and practices
- Clear articulation of student learning outcomes and skill development
- Quality of the linkages with and involvement of external partners/collaborators

The possibility of thematic linkages between proposals may also influence course selection.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Selected faculty teams will be invited to an initial meeting in late spring 2019 to discuss wicked problem course development. Timelines and milestones will be established at that juncture. Course design assistance from the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is tentatively scheduled for summer 2019. Specific dates will be established according to faculty availability.

In all, support for wicked problem courses includes:

- Extensive assistance from the CTL on course design and pedagogy
(This includes support for co-design sessions with students and partners/collaborators if desired)
- RA and/or TA support for course development and delivery
- Assistance with identifying potential partners/collaborators
- Access to discretionary funds (up to \$2,000) to cover costs associated with course projects

In addition, it may be possible for wicked problem courses to use the 4th Space for projects and activities.