



Municipal Administration Program (MAP) Unit 2: Municipal Administrative Structure Course Outline

Updated June 2025

Course Description

MAP Unit 2 focuses on the internal structure and organization of local government in Ontario, the ever-challenging relations between councillors and staff, and the municipal policy-making process.

By the end of this unit you will be able to:

- Compare the rationale, benefits, and drawbacks of different municipal governing structures
- Identify the key issues and events that led to the current municipal ethics regime and intensified the focus on ethical conduct
- Examine the legal, organizational, political, and historical factors that affect council–staff relations and council decision-making processes in your municipality
- Explain the roles of key players in local government and their influence on local political processes and policy decisions
- Use a basic policy analysis approach to analyze the who, what, and why behind a given municipal policy

The MAP certificate of completion will be issued upon completion of four units:

- Unit 1: Introduction to Local Government
- Unit 2: Municipal Administrative Structure
- Unit 3: Municipal Financial Management
- Unit 4: Management in the Municipality

MAP can be taken on its own or as part of AMCTO's Diploma in Municipal Administration (DMA). It is also the education pre-requisite for AMCTO's Certified Municipal Officer (CMO) and Accredited Municipal Professional (AMP) designations.

Course Delivery Formats

AMCTO offers MAP in two formats: correspondence format and Zoom format.

- If you are taking the course in **correspondence format**, you will complete the assigned readings and submit assessments according to a given schedule. There are no classes to attend. Your work is graded by a marker.
- If you are taking the course in **Zoom format**, you will attend interactive online classes led by an instructor in addition to completing readings and assessments. Your work is graded by the instructor.

All course materials, assessments, and discussion forums (in units where discussion forums apply) are provided through AMCTO's online learning platform, AMCTO Connect.

A syllabus with assessment due dates is provided when the course opens each term.

Course Grade Policy

To successfully complete the unit, students must earn a minimum grade of 51% on the final assignment and an overall average grade of 60% or higher for the entire unit.

Students who do not achieve 51% but score at least 35% on the final assignment will be given the opportunity for a re-write. This re-write must take place on the date(s) chosen by AMCTO.

Students who score less than 35% on the initial final assignment or under 51% on the re-write will be required to re-register to take the course in its entirety.

Assessment Expectations

MAP is an academic program that requires time commitment to read the textbook, conduct additional research, and complete assessments. The assessments in each course may include different formats such as essays, reports, memos, case analyses, discussion posts, and short-answer questions. Further guidelines and expectations will be provided in each course.

A note on time commitment: When past MAP students were asked to report how much time they spent on assessments, the responses varied widely because students come to the courses with different levels of prior knowledge, reading/research/writing skills, and professional experience. This makes it difficult to estimate how much time it will take to complete the course work. However, we recommend preparing to spend a minimum of 35 to 40 hours over the course of the term for each MAP unit.

Due Dates

There will be a schedule of assessment deadlines in the course. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the deadlines and understand the penalties for late submissions under Section 3 of the Education Programs Policy. The policy will be provided in the course syllabus.

Academic Integrity

Students in AMCTO's education programs are expected to abide by the association's policy on academic integrity (section 4 of the Education Programs Policy). Academic misconduct will result in a zero on an entire assessment and repeated offences will lead to more severe penalties such as expulsion.

Sources used in assessments must be properly cited according to the instructions and policies in the course. Using artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools or other automated tools to rewrite, paraphrase, or generate content (including but not limited to text, images, audio, and video) and representing it as one's own work is not permitted.

It is the student's responsibility to be informed about the definitions and consequences of academic misconduct. The full policy will be provided in the course syllabus.

MAP Unit 2 Topic Outline

Chapter 1: The Basic Municipal Governing Structure

- How Ontario municipalities are organized at the council and administration levels
- How the *Municipal Act, 2001* and the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* define the roles of municipal council, head of council, and administration
- Factors that contribute to the ability of heads of council to provide political leadership, including the introduction of strong mayor powers
- Rules for voting and candidacy in Ontario municipal elections
- The respective merits of short-term versus long-term terms of office, election-by-ward versus by general vote, and direct versus indirect election
- The role of committees in council decision-making

Chapter 2: Modifications to the Municipal Governing Structure

- The pressures that led to modifications of the traditional municipal governing structure
- Challenges within the traditional municipal structure at both the political and administrative levels
- Modified structures for governance and administration that have been in practice in Ontario municipalities, and their relative strengths and weaknesses
- What strong mayor powers are in the Ontario context and the initial impacts that have been seen since their introduction in 2022

Chapter 3: Ethics, Accountability, and Transparency

- The reasons behind the increased focus on ethics, accountability, and transparency in local government in recent years

- The legislated accountability and transparency regime for Ontario municipalities, including codes of conduct, integrity commissioners, and conflict-of-interest disclosure rules
- The importance of underlying values (the organizational culture) in supporting ethical behaviour

Chapter 4: Principal Players at the Local Level

- Factors that influence participation rates in municipal elections and referendums
- The key players (both official and unofficial) in the local political process and the impact of these players on the local political process
- The roles and inter-relationships of councillors and staff

Chapter 5: Municipal Policy-Making

- The complexities and challenges of developing and implementing municipal policies
- Models and theories that help explain how public policy decisions are made
- How individual policy decisions are made
- How staff, council, and the public interact during different stages of the policy-making process