Operating Policy – MSU Spark

## Purpose

## To be a student-led, student-run Service of the McMaster Students Union (MSU) that is devoted to setting the stage for student success in university;

## To provide students with small group environments that facilitate first-year growth, and build personal development and reflection skills for their undergraduate career;

## To encourage extracurricular participation by introducing first year students to campus services, clubs and leadership opportunities;

## To connect students to their peers and upper-year students to promote increased support on academic issues and associated first year challenges;

## To actively support the broader first year population by acting as a resource, identifying areas of need, and hosting workshops to address these areas.

## Operating Parameters

## The structure of the MSU Spark program shall be as follows:

### MSU Spark shall be planned and promoted over the spring and summer;

### Participation in weekly sessions, which shall:

#### Be comprised of small groups of first-year students;

#### Be led by two (2) non-first year, undergraduate Team Leaders;

#### Occur during the Fall and Winter terms;

#### Be between 1-2 hours per session;

#### Be held once per week for the length of the term;

### The topics of each week’s sessions will be planned by the Spark Director in conjunction with the Vice-President (Administration), as necessary;

### A session may be comprised of:

#### Leadership activities;

#### Presentations from speakers;

#### Discussions;

#### Journaling/reflection periods;

#### Games; and

#### Other activities deemed as appropriate by the Spark Director.

## MSU Spark shall facilitate optional study groups and social events at various points throughout the term to promote building inclusive student learning communities;

## MSU Spark shall facilitate optional, open workshops twice per term to address the specific challenges faced by most first year students at relevant points throughout the year.

## The opportunity to participate in the MSU Spark program is available to all eligible first-year students at no cost to the participant;

## MSU Spark shall be guided by the following learning outcomes:

### Providing a sense of comfort, connection, and support within the McMaster University;

### Appreciating the importance and value of extracurricular university involvement;

### Demonstrating self-reflection and the ability to identify opportunities for individual growth;

### Clarifying academic, personal, and career-related goals, and assisting students in creating a plan of action to accomplish them;

### Facilitating an improved suite of leadership skills, including communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

### Incoming or current first-year students shall sign up for MSU Spark through an online application process for each term, respectively.

## The eligibility requirements for participation are as follows:

### The applicant is currently (or will be, in that calendar year), a Level I student at McMaster University;

### The applicant has not completed the MSU Spark program in a previous term or previous year.

## Participation in MSU Spark will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis;

### Exceptions may be provided to participants who have a high potential to benefit from the program, including:

#### Students who belong to marginalized groups;

#### Students on academic probation; and

#### First-generation students.

## The Spark Director shall set the appropriate cap for the number of first-year participants based on available resources, including, but not limited to:

### Volunteers;

### Budget; and

### Logistical constraints.

## Online applications will include questions for students in order to allow for diverse session groups;

### Sessions should aim to include diverse groups of students, based on:

#### Differing personal goals;

#### Faculty;

#### Personality type;

#### Comfort leve; and

#### History of prior involvement.

### The application information shall remain as confidential as possible;

## MSU Spark shall aim to accomplish the following:

### Forming and maintaining personal connections and relationships between students;

### Forming and maintaining personal connections between first year students and upper year students.

## A certificate of completion shall be granted to participants who attend and participate in a minimum of 8 weekly sessions;

### Additional recognition events for student participants may be planned at the discretion of the Spark Director and Assistant Director.

## Personnel Structure

## The Spark Director, who shall:

### Be responsible for the planning and promoting of MSU Spark during the summer and managing MSU Spark throughout the academic year;

### Perform duties as outlined in the Spark Director job description.

## The Spark Assistant Director, who shall:

### Assist the Spark Director with planning and promoting MSU Spark during the summer and managing MSU Spark throughout the academic year;

### Perform duties as outlined in the Spark Assistant Director job description.

## The Spark Outreach & Engagement Coordinator(s), who shall:

### Be responsible for coordinating outreach and promoting the role of MSU Spark for first year students;

### Perform duties outlined in the Spark Volunteer Coordinator job description.

## The Spark Promotions & Publications Coordinator(s) who shall:

### Be responsible for the creation of engaging and informative materials for first year students;

### Perform duties outlined in the Spark Promotions & Publications Coordinator job description.

## The Spark Sessions Coordinator(s) who shall:

### Be responsible for the research and development of all MSU Spark sessions;

### Perform duties outlined in the Spark Sessions Coordinator job description.

## The Spark Events Coordinator(s) who shall:

### Be responsible for creating and implementing inclusive social events for both MSU Spark students and the broader first year community;

### Create and implement four (4) large scale workshops focused on first year success;

### Perform duties outlined in the Spark Events Coordinator job description.

## The Team Leaders, who shall:

### Be student volunteers who lead the weekly sessions with first year students;

### Regularly engage in informal meetings with MSU Spark students;

### Perform the duties outlined in the Team Leader job description.