



Operating Policy – MSU Spark

1. Purpose

- 1.1. 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;
- 1.2. To provide students with small group environments that facilitate first-year growth, and build personal development and reflection skills for their undergraduate career;
- 1.3. To encourage extracurricular participation by introducing first year students to campus services, clubs and leadership opportunities;
- 1.4. To connect students to their peers and upper-year students to promote increased support on academic issues and associated first year challenges;
- 1.5. To actively support the broader first year population by acting as a resource, identifying areas of need, and hosting workshops to address these areas.

2. Operating Parameters

- 2.1. The structure of the MSU Spark program shall be as follows:
 - 2.1.1. MSU Spark shall be planned and promoted over the spring and summer;
 - 2.1.2. Participation in weekly sessions, which shall:
 - 2.1.2.1. Be comprised of small groups of first-year students;
 - 2.1.2.2. Be led by two (2) non-first year, undergraduate Team Leaders;
 - 2.1.2.3. Occur during the Fall and Winter terms;
 - 2.1.2.4. Be between 1-2 hours per session;
 - 2.1.2.5. Be held once per week for the length of the term;

Approved 13K

Revised 15D, 20Q

- 2.1.3. The topics of each week's sessions will be planned by the Spark Director in conjunction with the Vice-President (Administration), as necessary;
- 2.1.4. A session may be comprised of:
 - 2.1.4.1. Leadership activities;
 - 2.1.4.2. Presentations from speakers;
 - 2.1.4.3. Discussions;
 - 2.1.4.4. Journaling/reflection periods;
 - 2.1.4.5. Games; and
 - 2.1.4.6. Other activities deemed as appropriate by the Spark Director.
- 2.2. MSU Spark shall facilitate optional study groups and social events at various points throughout the term to promote building inclusive student learning communities;
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. The opportunity to participate in the MSU Spark program is available to all eligible first-year students at no cost to the participant;
- 2.5. MSU Spark shall be guided by the following learning outcomes:
 - 2.5.1. Providing a sense of comfort, connection, and support within the McMaster University;
 - 2.5.2. Appreciating the importance and value of extracurricular university involvement;
 - 2.5.3. Demonstrating self-reflection and the ability to identify opportunities for individual growth;
 - 2.5.4. Clarifying academic, personal, and career-related goals, and assisting students in creating a plan of action to accomplish them;
 - 2.5.5. Facilitating an improved suite of leadership skills, including communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution.
 - 2.5.6. Incoming or current first-year students shall sign up for MSU Spark through an online application process for each term, respectively.
- 2.6. The eligibility requirements for participation are as follows:
 - 2.6.1. The applicant is currently (or will be, in that calendar year), a Level I student at McMaster University;
 - 2.6.2. The applicant has not completed the MSU Spark program in a previous term or previous year.

- 2.7. Participation in MSU Spark will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis;
 - 2.7.1. Exceptions may be provided to participants who have a high potential to benefit from the program, including:
 - 2.7.1.1. Students who belong to marginalized groups;
 - 2.7.1.2. Students on academic probation; and
 - 2.7.1.3. First-generation students.
- 2.8. The Spark Director shall set the appropriate cap for the number of first-year participants based on available resources, including, but not limited to:
 - 2.8.1. Volunteers;
 - 2.8.2. Budget; and
 - 2.8.3. Logistical constraints.
- 2.9. Online applications will include questions for students in order to allow for diverse session groups;
 - 2.9.1. Sessions should aim to include diverse groups of students, based on:
 - 2.9.1.1. Differing personal goals;
 - 2.9.1.2. Faculty;
 - 2.9.1.3. Personality type;
 - 2.9.1.4. Comfort level; and
 - 2.9.1.5. History of prior involvement.
 - 2.9.2. The application information shall remain as confidential as possible;
- 2.10. MSU Spark shall aim to accomplish the following:
 - 2.10.1. Forming and maintaining personal connections and relationships between students;
 - 2.10.2. Forming and maintaining personal connections between first year students and upper year students.
- 2.11. A certificate of completion shall be granted to participants who attend and participate in a minimum of 8 weekly sessions;

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

3. Personnel Structure

- 3.1. The Spark Director, who shall:
 - 3.1.1. Be responsible for the planning and promoting of MSU Spark during the summer and managing MSU Spark throughout the academic year;
 - 3.1.2. Perform duties as outlined in the Spark Director job description.
- 3.2. The Spark Assistant Director, who shall:
 - 3.2.1. Assist the Spark Director with planning and promoting MSU Spark during the summer and managing MSU Spark throughout the academic year;
 - 3.2.2. Perform duties as outlined in the Spark Assistant Director job description.
- 3.3. The Spark Outreach & Engagement Coordinator(s), who shall:
 - 3.3.1. Be responsible for coordinating outreach and promoting the role of MSU Spark for first year students;
 - 3.3.2. Perform duties outlined in the Spark Volunteer Coordinator job description.
- 3.4. The Spark Promotions & Publications Coordinator(s) who shall:
 - 3.4.1. Be responsible for the creation of engaging and informative materials for first year students;
 - 3.4.2. Perform duties outlined in the Spark Promotions & Publications Coordinator job description.
- 3.5. The Spark Sessions Coordinator(s) who shall:
 - 3.5.1. Be responsible for the research and development of all MSU Spark sessions;
 - 3.5.2. Perform duties outlined in the Spark Sessions Coordinator job description.
- 3.6. The Spark Events Coordinator(s) who shall:

- 3.6.1. Be responsible for creating and implementing inclusive social events for both MSU Spark students and the broader first year community;
 - 3.6.2. Create and implement four (4) large scale workshops focused on first year success;
 - 3.6.3. Perform duties outlined in the Spark Events Coordinator job description.
- 3.7. The Team Leaders, who shall:
- 3.7.1. Be student volunteers who lead the weekly sessions with first year students;
 - 3.7.2. Regularly engage in informal meetings with MSU Spark students;
 - 3.7.3. Perform the duties outlined in the Team Leader job description.