



## 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 first-year 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;
- 1.6. To form and maintain personal connections and relationships between students;
- 4.5-1.7. To form and maintain personal connections between first-year students and upper-year students.

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### 2. Operating Parameters

- 2.1. ~~The structure of the~~ MSU Spark ~~program shall be as follows~~shall:

- 2.1.1. ~~MSU Spark shall be~~ planned and promoted over the spring and summer;
- 2.1.2. ~~MSU Spark shall facilitate workshops during the summer term for incoming Level I students to prepare them for their transition;~~
- 2.1.3. ~~Participation in~~Offer weekly sessions, which shall:
  - 2.1.3.1. Be comprised of small groups of first-year students;
  - 2.1.3.2. Be led by at least two (2) non-first-year, undergraduate Team Leaders;
  - 2.1.3.3. Occur during the ~~f~~Fall and ~~w~~Winter terms;
  - 2.1.3.4. Be between 1-2 hours per session;
  - 2.1.3.5. Be held once per week for the length of the term for a minimum of 8 weeks;
  - 2.1.3.6. The topics of each week's sessions will be planned by the Spark ~~Director~~Session Coordinators in conjunction with the Spark Director and Vice-President (Administration), as necessary;
  - 2.1.3.2.2 2.1.3.7. A session may be comprised of:
    - 2.1.3.2.1 2.1.3.7.1. Leadership activities;

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- [2.1.3.2.2-2.1.3.7.2.](#) Presentations from speakers;
- [2.1.3.2.3-2.1.3.7.3.](#) Discussions;
- [2.1.3.2.4-2.1.3.7.4.](#) Journaling/reflection periods;
- [2.1.3.2.5-2.1.3.7.5.](#) Games; and
- [2.1.3.2.6-2.1.3.7.6.](#) Other activities deemed as appropriate by the Spark Director.

- 2.1.4. Facilitate optional study groups and social events at various points throughout the term to promote building inclusive student learning communities;
- 2.1.5. ~~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.

2.2. The opportunity to participate in the MSU Spark program ~~is~~ will be available to all eligible first-year students at no cost to the participant;

2.3. MSU Spark shall be guided by the following learning outcomes:

- 2.3.1. ~~MSU Spark shall facilitate workshops in the Summer term for prospective Level I students at McMaster University to prepare them for their transition and promote the Service~~ Providing a sense of comfort, connection, and support within ~~the~~ McMaster University;
- 2.3.2. Appreciating the importance and value of extracurricular university involvement;
- 2.3.3. Demonstrating self-reflection and the ability to identify opportunities for individual growth;
- 2.3.4. Clarifying academic, personal, and career-related goals, and assisting students in creating a plan of action to accomplish them;
- 2.3.5. Facilitating an improved suite of leadership skills, including communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

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

[2.5-2.4.1.](#) Eligibility requirements for participation are as follows:

[2.5-1-2.4.1.1.](#) 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~~

[2.6-2.4.2.](#) Spots of Participation offered in MSU Spark ~~will be~~ provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

[2.6-1-2.4.3.](#) Exceptions may be provided to participants who have a high potential to benefit from the program, including:

- [2.6-1-1-2.4.3.1.](#) Students who belong to marginalized groups;
- [2.6-1-2-2.4.3.2.](#) Students on academic probation; and
- [2.6-1-3-2.4.3.3.](#) First-generation students.

[2.7-2.4.4.](#) The Spark Director shall set the appropriate cap for the number of first-year participants based on available resources, including, but not limited to:

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- [2.7.1-2.4.4.1.](#) Volunteers;
- [2.7.2-2.4.4.2.](#) Budget; and
- [2.7.3-2.4.4.3.](#) Logistical constraints.

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[2.8-2.4.5.](#) Online [registration](#) applications will include questions for students in order to allow for diverse session groups;

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[2.8.1-2.4.6.](#) Sessions should aim to include diverse groups of students, based on:

- [2.8.1.1-2.4.6.1.](#) Differing personal goals;
- [2.8.1.2-2.4.6.2.](#) Faculty;
- [2.8.1.3-2.4.6.3.](#) Personality type;
- [2.8.1.4-2.4.6.4.](#) Comfort level; and
- [2.8.1.5-2.4.6.5.](#) History of prior involvement.

[2.8-2.2.4.7.](#) The application information shall remain ~~as~~ confidential [to the Spark Director and Assistant Director as possible](#).

[2.9-2.5.](#) A certificate of completion shall be granted to participants who attend and participate in a minimum of [875% of](#) weekly sessions;

[2.9.1-2.5.1.](#) Additional recognition events for student participants may be planned at the discretion of the Spark Director and Assistant Director.

[2.10-2.6.](#) MSU Spark shall award the “Spark Scholarship”, valued at \$200 each, to two (2) participants [annually who have demonstrated distinguished commitment and engagement within sessions](#);

[2.10.1-2.6.1.](#) [Eligibility requirements for the scholarship are as follows:](#)

- [2.10.1.1-2.6.1.1.](#) [Must be a Level 1 student at McMaster University registered in MSU Spark;](#)
- [2.10.1.2-2.6.1.2.](#) [Must attend at least four \(4\) sessions in the fall term and four \(4\) sessions in the winter term, or at least six \(6\) sessions in the winter term;](#)
- [2.10.1.3-2.6.1.3.](#) [Must complete a standardized application form;](#)
- [2.10.1.4-2.6.1.4.](#) [Must acquire a reference from one \(1\) Team Leader.](#)

### 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;
- 3.1.3. [Be hired by a hiring committee struck by the Executive Board that shall consist of:](#)
  - 3.1.3.1. [The Vice-President \(Administration\);](#)

3.1.3.2. The outgoing Spark Director;

3.1.3.2.1. If the outgoing Spark Director is re-applying for the position, the Spark Assistant Director will sit on the Committee;

3.1.3.2.2. If the Spark Assistant Director is applying for the position, the seat will be filled by a member of Executive Board;

3.1.3.3. One (1) Executive Board member.

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;

3.2.3. Be hired by a hiring committee struck by the Executive Board that shall consist of:

3.2.3.1. The incoming Spark Director;

3.2.3.2. The outgoing Spark Assistant Director;

3.2.3.2.1. If the outgoing Spark Assistant Director is the incoming Director then the seat will be filled by the Vice-President (Administration);

3.2.3.3. One (1) Executive Board member.

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. Be responsible for overseeing the Spark Scholarship program;

3.3.3. Perform duties outlined in the Spark ~~Volunteer~~ Outreach & Engagement Coordinator job description.;

3.3.4. Be selected by the Spark Director and Assistant Director through an application and interview process.

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.;

3.4.3. Be selected by the Spark Director and Assistant Director through an application and interview process.

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;
- 3.5.3. [Be selected by the Spark Director and Assistant Director through an application and interview process.](#)

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. [Help implement summer programming for the incoming first-year community focused on first-year success in coordination with the Spark Director;](#)
- 3.6.4. Perform duties outlined in the Spark Events Coordinator job description;
- 3.6.5. [Be selected by the Spark Director and Assistant Director through an application and interview process.](#)

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;
- 3.7.4. [Be selected by the Spark Director, Assistant Director, and Executive Team through an application and interview process.](#)