

Policy Design and Delivery: A Systematic Approach

COURSE A OUTLINE

This course will equip you to design, analyze and recommend policies that create change in the world. You will learn essential techniques and frameworks while working on real policies from around the world and a personal policy challenge of your own choosing. Whether you work in government, the private sector, non-profits, activism, entrepreneurship, or community organization, this course will empower you to design policy solutions to help create the type of world in which you want to live. The course follows a “policy design arc” that begins with tools for identifying the roots of a policy problems and then designing an effective policy. An effective policy is one that will achieve the intended results, is politically feasible, and implementable. You will learn how to compare different policy options, consider the tradeoffs of each one, and then succinctly recommend the option most likely to succeed.

	Topic	Content	Assignments
Week 1	Foundations for Policy Design	<p>Normative frames: the value-based viewpoints that shape policy work</p> <p>Strengths and challenges of three policy actors: the market, the government, and civil society</p> <p>Three criteria for a policy to succeed</p> <p>Framework: the strategic triangle</p>	<p>Individual assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignment • Quiz • Discussion <p>Group assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous hour meeting • Group assignment
Week 2	What is the Underlying Problem?	<p>Problem diagnosis: identifying and mapping failures and root causes</p> <p>Using problem diagnosis to detect points of leverage for policy solutions</p> <p>Tool: Ishikawa diagram</p>	<p>Individual assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignment • Case analysis • Discussion <p>Group assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous hour meeting • Group case analysis
Week 3	What Could Impact the Problem?	<p>Challenging preconceptions and evaluating a policy’s technical correctness</p> <p>Mapping causal links between policy interventions and outcomes, and selecting good indicators</p> <p>Using models in a complex world</p> <p>Tools: Theory of change / log-frame</p>	<p>Individual assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignment • Case analysis • Quiz <p>Group assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous hour meeting • Group case analysis

	Topic	Content	Assignments
Week 4	Who Are the Key Influencers?	<p>Systematically evaluating sources of formal and informal authorization for policy approval/implementation</p> <p>Background on comparative politics and types of political institutions</p> <p>Framework: Stakeholder analysis</p>	<p>Individual assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignment • Case analysis • Quiz <p>Group assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous hour meeting • Group case analysis
Week 5	Can You Implement the Policy?	<p>Assessing practical and structural concerns of policy implementation in the context of organizations</p> <p>Insights from institutional theory on implementation capacities</p> <p>Framework: Evaluating implementation capacity</p>	<p>Individual assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignment • Case analysis • Quiz <p>Group assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous hour meeting • Group case analysis
Week 6	Making a Policy Recommendation	<p>Structured comparison of policy solutions across strategic triangle</p> <p>Making tradeoffs in service of selecting the best policy solution</p> <p>Effective communication of policy recommendations to stakeholders</p> <p>Tool: Policy matrix</p>	<p>Individual assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignment • Discussion <p>Group assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous hour meeting • Group peer consultations

Materials

All course materials will be provided each week, including videos, readings, and assignment templates.

This course examines global cases from across sectors to help you understand policy design. Examples include rural poverty in India, carbon taxation in Canada, a public private partnership in the U.S.A., and education in Kenya.

Scoring

Course performance is not assigned a letter grade, but instead a designation of Pass or No Pass. Approximately the top 10% of the course (not necessarily those who score above 90%) are recognized with Pass with Distinction.

- 40%: Individual Assignments & Quizzes
- 20%: Final Policy Recommendation
- 20%: Group Assignments
- 10%: Case Analysis Companions
- 5%: Discussion Posts
- 5%: Feedback Surveys

Course Policies

See onlinelearning.hks.harvard.edu for full FAQs.