Master in Public Policy Program: Policy Analysis Exercise 2020/2021

The Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) is the capstone of the two-year Master in Public Policy (MPP) program at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. The PAE for academic year 2020/21 will be conducted under theme of "The World After the Pandemic". Specifically, our PAE teams will look at how various policy domains, industries, societies and governments would be disrupted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and what the post-pandemic world would look like, and how governments would have to adapt.

The PAE is an eight-month long consultancy project that students undertake in teams of 3-5 members with clients from the public, private, or non-profit sectors. Regardless of which sector he/she is from, the client is someone involved in serving or advancing the public interest. Appropriate clients include: 1. Elected officials or political appointees; 2. Public managers or external consultants who advise these officials; 3. Policy advocates outside and inside the government; 4. Non-government organisations (NGOs) and businesses that work to advance the public interest; and 5. Interest groups and professional/trade associations

The output of the PAE is a report which analyses a policy problem or challenge that the PAE client has identified. The PAE report is an analytical and consultative product which uses research methods, but it is not a research paper in the traditional sense. It requires students to synthesize four skills: (1) substantive knowledge of the domain in which the PAE project is on (e.g. infrastructure, health, transport, the environmental, science and technology policy); (2) knowledge of applied research methods and the skills to apply those methods (e.g. study design, interviewing, cost-benefit analysis); (3) skills in negotiating a consultant relationship with a client and locating oneself and one's project within the client's organisational, regulatory and political settings; and (4) skills in writing and presentation.

The ideal PAE client is one whose actions and decisions have a real impact on public policy, who understands the purpose of the PAE, and who is willing to provide mentorship, advice, other forms of assistance (e.g. time, access to people, information) for the project. It is also important that the client have a reasonably clear understanding of what he or she wants. At the same time, what the PAE teams bring to the clients is independence. PAE teams are thus encouraged to look at the problem from points of view other than that of the client, and to bring those differing perspectives to the client's attention.

In addition to the client, each PAE team would be guided by a faculty advisor. PAE projects will be assessed and graded by their respective faculty advisers and second readers, although clients are welcome to provide their inputs of their teams' performance.

The PAE will culminate with a PAE conference in April/May 2021 that all clients would be invited to, and in which all the PAE teams will present their key findings.