

Course Descriptions  
**Master of Science in  
Learning & Organizational Change**

School of Education and Social Policy

NORTHWESTERN  
**MSLOC**  
M A S T E R ' S P R O G R A M

### *MSLOC Foundations*

This course will introduce students to foundational concepts and frameworks that can be used to anchor and integrate their learning throughout the MSLOC program. The course will cover methods and tools applied in multiple organizational settings to solve problems and increase individual, group and organizational effectiveness. Through class meetings and an action learning project that extends through three quarters, students will begin to apply organizational theory to the practice of organizational transformation.

### *Accelerating Learning & Performance*

The L&P curriculum focuses on the levers of Human Performance at the organizational, team and individual levels and on learning as a key lever for enhancing performance. In *Accelerating Learning & Performance*, we focus on defining the performance theories that operate at the individual level of analysis (e.g., skills, motivation); models that can be used to diagnose performance gaps/improvement opportunities; and techniques that can be used to design solutions that will enhance the effectiveness of individuals within organizations.

The course content includes concepts, theories and methods involved in cognitive science, psychology, education, and organizational behavior. Student contributions to discussions on the required readings and sharing of personal experiences are vital to achieve understanding and comprehension of the concepts presented in the course.

### *Advancing Learning & Performance Solutions*

This course will introduce students to a variety of traditional and innovative methods and practices designed to increase individual, group and organizational performance. The functioning of teams and effects of group dynamics on organization performance and learning will be examined. Students will apply their knowledge of learning and performance during simulations and case studies to advance their skills in implementing solutions, evaluating those solutions, and adapting and redesigning solutions to improve effectiveness. Learning will be framed not only as a specific role or function commonly associated with training but also as an implicit process within the structure and culture of competitive global organizations. This course will help students select and use tools to make the learning process more strategic, systematic and applicable in a wide range of situations.

### *Designing Strategies for Knowledge Work*

In this course, students will develop an understanding of how knowledge and knowledge work contribute to an organization's success, as well as how to design strategies to address critical knowledge work issues and challenges. The course will introduce theory, concepts, and frameworks to enable students to develop effective strategies. Students will learn how to apply course concepts through business cases and course projects. Guest speakers will also offer leadership perspectives on the real-world challenges of successfully managing knowledge in organizations.

### *Making Knowledge Work*

The goal of this class is to enable students to develop an understanding of the major challenges involved in implementing knowledge management strategies, programs and projects as well as how to overcome those challenges in complex real-world situations. The course introduces a model-based approach to meeting six common KM implementation challenges. Students learn, through case analysis and class projects, how to apply, innovate or refine knowledge models in order to develop effective knowledge strategies, to design interventions that focus on employee and customer cognition, to deal with knowledge governance and politics and to make sure that KM does not get lost in long and complex projects dominated by IT. Students will study emerging and potentially disruptive business trends that are fueled by innovative knowledge models as well as growing social and organizational problems that persist because of the lack of knowledge model innovation.

### *Executing Strategic Change*

This course will provide students with concepts, tools and knowledge of strategic change. This will include looking at the broad models surrounding change as well as exploring the different interest groups, impacts and implications of change. Students will gain skills in the diagnosis of change, identifying frameworks to utilize in the support and guidance of change, and understanding a variety of assessments and concepts for strategic change. Since strategic change has wide ranging implications, we will look at change using macro, micro and systems frameworks.

### *Designing Sustainable Strategic Change*

This course will focus on how strategic organizational change can be effectively designed, implemented and sustained, using one primary model and going deeply into each element using a variety of learning modalities. We will study one primary model and various methods to address the practical realities of this assumption: *An organization's success lies in its ability to pursue its Vision & Mission as it responds to changes in its environment; it does this via appropriate changes in strategic direction, accompanied by sustainable realignment and behavior changes within the organization.*

Topics covered will include: overall model of sustainable change, participatory methods for strategic planning and large-scale systems change, "transition" vs. change, the power of execution, motivational theory, gaining commitment to change, power/politics and coalition-building in the change process, dynamics of culture and change.

### *MSLOC Practicum*

The Practicum is a term-long consulting project that invites students to demonstrate their skills in applying MSLOC concepts to "real world" organizational challenges. Students may choose to work as an individual or as a member of a small consulting team, practicing the problem-solving, client engagement and project management skills of a good (internal or external) consultant. Projects may involve assessment, analysis, design, implementation and/or evaluation in MSLOC-related areas of learning, knowledge or change. They can come from the student's own place of work or an organizational partner of the MSLOC program. MSLOC faculty serve as coaches who advise students throughout the project's duration. At the conclusion of the project, students will be asked to think critically and reflectively about their experience and create a written work that represents this thinking. Taking a second practicum is an option, which counts as an elective.

### *MSLOC Capstone - 3 terms*

The Capstone Project is designed for three consecutive quarters near the end of each degree student's program. Although the Capstone project is more application oriented than a traditional Master's thesis, MSLOC students should regard this as their culminating take-away from the program. The Capstone provides an opportunity for each student, individually, to complete a research project or to design and implement an intervention that translates to an expertise in a specialty area selected by the student. The project may concentrate on one of the three disciplines of learning and performance, knowledge management or strategic change.

During the first term, students participate in a "Research Methods" class, which builds skills in assessment, data-gathering, research design and critical thinking. During the two subsequent terms, students meet with their Capstone Advisors and in small seminar groups. In addition to their final product (e.g., research paper, organizational intervention, designed tool or system), students share their work with their advisors, faculty members and fellow students through an executive summary paper. Some students also may be invited to present their work to the community. These executive summaries and presentations demonstrate how students' learning in the program was integrated into their research and final products.

### *MSLOC Elective - Transformational Consulting*

This course will introduce students to the advanced methods and tools used in a collaborative consulting process, with an emphasis on helping clients achieve successful organizational transformations. Using greater self-awareness and their subject matter expertise, students will learn and practice the fundamentals of collaborative consulting, including how to build rapport, how to leverage active listening to help the client determine the root cause of the problem (or opportunity), how to move a client through phases of the project, (especially when the client is reluctant to act), how to co-project manage an assignment and how to maintain long-term relationships. The class also will touch on consulting sales activities and presentation skills necessary at the different steps in the consulting relationship.

### *MSLOC Elective - Cognitive Design*

This course will introduce students to the methods and tools needed to design organizational improvements and generate new product ideas that support and enhance the cognition of employees and customers. Cognitive design is devoted to understanding how people perceive, think, remember, feel and relate in real world situations and using that understanding to drive innovations in products, processes, HR programs, change initiatives and other organizational improvements. Students will learn how to design organizational artifacts (e.g. new products, improved workflows, behavior change programs) that fit how the human mind works along both the intellectual and emotional dimensions. This is a project-based course where students work in teams to model cognition, identify unmet needs and apply leading ideas of applied cognitive science to pressing design challenges in business.

### *MSLOC Elective - Applying Social Network Analysis in LOC*

The objective of this course is to prepare students to apply social network analysis (SNA) methods and tools to their work as LOC practitioners and leaders. Approaching SNA from a practitioner's point of view, students will learn the basic concepts, methods and tools necessary to plan and conduct a "realworld" SNA project designed to improve organizational effectiveness. Students will connect SNA to concepts, problems and opportunities introduced across the MSLOC curriculum, including learning and performance, strategic change, knowledge management and cognitive design. Students also will develop as a network-savvy leader, enabling them to drive the management innovation needed to create organizations that naturally support informal networks. Finally, students will learn how to apply SNA to advance personal and professional development for themselves and other leaders.

Social networks will be framed in this course as a management innovation, not just a tool or application. Students will be challenged to rethink the basic tasks of management and leadership in light of structural and human networks.

### *Additional Elective Choices*

Students can choose electives from programs offered through other graduate programs at Northwestern. Especially relevant schools/departments around the University include:

- School of Education & Social Policy, Learning Sciences: [www.sesp.northwestern.edu/ls/info/overview](http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/ls/info/overview)
- Kellogg School of Management: [www1.kellogg.northwestern.edu/dpco/catalog.as](http://www1.kellogg.northwestern.edu/dpco/catalog.as)
- Medill School of Journalism, Integrated Marketing Communications: [www.medill.northwestern.edu/imc](http://www.medill.northwestern.edu/imc)
- McCormick School of Engineering, Masters of Engineering Management: [mem.northwestern.edu](http://mem.northwestern.edu)

Each school at Northwestern has different policies and practices for enrolling in elective courses. Students work with a MSLOC advisor to identify and select from those electives that are open to students from other degree programs.