International Relations
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan
May 2026

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Social Science	
Degrees Offered	Bachelor of Arts (BA)	
Date of Last Review	2017-2018	
Modules Reviewed	Honours Specialization in International Relations	
External Reviewers	Dr. Daniel Gorman Professor, Department of History University of Waterloo	Dr. David Haglund, Professor, Department of Political Studies Queen's University
Internal Reviewers	Dr. Jeff Wood, Associate Dean Undergraduate Studies Faculty of Engineering	Morgan DeCampos, Undergraduate Student, English Language and Literature
Date of Site Visit	February 9 and 10, 2026	
Date Review Report Received	March 11, 2026	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program Response: April 23, 2006 Faculty Response: May 7, 2026	
Evaluation	Good Quality with Report in Two Years	
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: June 16, 2026 ACA: September 8, 2026 Senate (for information): September 18, 2026	
Year of Next Review	2033-2034	
Progress Report	June 2029	

Overview of Western's Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Undergraduate International Relations Program, delivered by the Faculty of Science.

This FAR considers the following documents:
- the program's self-study brief;
- the external reviewers' report;
- the response from the Program; and
- the response from the Dean, Faculty of Social Science.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Subcommittee on Program Review - Undergraduate (SUPR-U) and the Senate Committee on Academic Curriculum and Awards (ACA), then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western's IQAP website. The FAR is the only document from the cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Undergraduate International Relations Program, the Faculty of Social Science, and SUPR-U.

Executive Summary

The International Relations (IR) Program is firmly anchored in the Faculty of Social Science and since 2006 has provided an academically demanding and solid preparation for a wide range of careers in government, law, business, journalism, and education. The program is jointly offered by the Departments of Political Science and History and encompasses two interdisciplinary degrees: an Honours Specialization in International Relations and an Honours Specialization in International Relations/HBA offered in conjunction with the Ivey Business School since 2010. Students are generally admitted in their second year once they have completed the necessary prerequisites. Both programs are aimed at outstanding students with a high degree of self-organization and excellent academic, social, and communication skills, curious about global affairs. Total enrolment in the Honours Specialization was at 62 students in 2025-2026. Since 2021,

17 students graduated with the combined degree in Honours Specialization International Relations/HBA.

The self-study was informed by student focus groups, faculty and student surveys and staff consultations in History, Political Science, and the Ivey Business School. Three work study students supported the development of a new website, data visualizations, and comparative analysis of IR programs in Canada. The review process was scaffolded by a dedicated International Relations Review Committee.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the International Relations Program. They offer 12 recommendations with considerations for further enhancement.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- The IR program is the only collaborative History–Political Science joint program of its kind among known Canadian IR programs, offering students a genuinely blended disciplinary experience.
- The signature 4th-year capstone project, historically team-taught by faculty from both departments and involving collaborative policy research, is celebrated by alumni and students as a formative, career-shaping learning experience.
- The program's student club the "Association of International Relations" (AIR), actively organizes events, including Symposia, Lectures, and Career Workshops.
- Students frequently participate in further studies and internships abroad with institutions such as; Erasmus University Rotterdam, Sciences-Po, Paris, Bocconi University, Milan, and Yonsei University, Seoul.
- Current initiative by alumni to create dedicated co-op positions for IR students with the Canadian Forces (CF).
- Alumni survey data shows 92% full-time employment and 64% pursuing graduate or professional school (at institutions such as Munk, NPSIA, Sciences Po, and Harvard Kennedy School).
- Strong potential for engaging with other areas beyond history and political science to environmental studies, Indigenous studies, economics, the arts, health sciences, journalism, music, film and media studies etc.

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program

- Significant enrolment volatility and recruitment challenges.
- The team-taught, year-long, interdisciplinary capstone (the former International Relations 4702E) was split into two separate half-courses taught independently by each department due to workload and resource constraints, diminishing curricular cohesion.

- Currently, no mandatory micro- or macroeconomics requirement, leaving roughly two-thirds of graduates underprepared for graduate-level IR training and for employer expectations identified in Lightcast labour market data.
- No required experiential placement, placing it among a small minority of Canadian IR programs without one, despite this being one of the most widely expressed requests from current students and alumni.
- Need for a dedicated exit survey of students to more regularly track feedback on program strengths and weaknesses.
- Need for a dedicated budget independent of its constituent departments, sufficient to sustain its current experiential learning activities.

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and a graduate student reviewer, were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met in-person over two days with the:

- Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
- Vice-Provost, Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty
- Director, Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Dean, Faculty of Social Science
- Associate Dean, Academic, Faculty of Social Science
- Director, Culture and Inclusion, Ivey Business School
- Academic Advisor, Ivey Business School
- Department Chair, History
- Department Chair, Political Science
- Undergraduate Chair, History
- Undergraduate Chair, Political Science
- Program Director, International Relations
- Archives and Special Collections Librarian
- Associate Chief Librarian, Planning
- Program Faculty Members
- Undergraduate Program Staff
- Undergraduate Students
- President, University Students' Council

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this FAR. The FAR is collated and submitted to SUPR-U by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers' Report

External reviewers shared that the program *"offers a highly engaged and cohesive student experience, frequently described by students as a 'tight knit family' characterized by small class sizes, close peer relationships, and strong connections with faculty*."

Strengths of the Program:

- Distinctive interdisciplinary model with the integration of Political Science theory/methods and History's contextual depth is viewed by students, many faculty, and the decanal office as a prestigious, distinguishing feature.
- Rigorous academic structure anchored by the capstone and essay-intensive courses.
- Strong extra-curricular career and experiential learning ecosystem with alumni workshops, applied projects, co-op placements (including unique Canadian Forces opportunities), exchange pathways, and professionalization resources.
- Multiple signature initiatives like networking events, research symposia, collaborations with the arts (e.g., the Vandor exhibit) and student-led associations, have enriched the program's intellectual and community life.
- Strong program leadership has been a critical contributor to program revitalization.
- Excellent library support, adequate student services, and minimal operating costs.

Prospective Areas of Improvement for the Program to Consider

- A renewed governance structure and succession plan is urgently needed (associated with recs #9, #10, #12).
- Need to institutionalize the program's signature activities through shared governance, dedicated staff support, and infrastructure investment so they can survive upcoming leadership transitions (associated with rec #4).
- Divergent understandings of what constitutes "International Relations," differing methodological expectations, and inconsistent IR-eligible course criteria have produced parallel rather than coordinated curriculum development across host departments (associated with rec #8).
    - Collaborative development of a program mission statement, defining what constitutes as "International Relations".
- Consideration of Economics 1022A/B as a year 1 prerequisite for admission to the IR program to not overload the current credit heavy module (associated with rec #5).
- Maintain one integrated capstone with an alternating departmental host, or two synchronized sections in high-demand years (associated with rec #7).
- Inconsistent marketing across departments and a Year 2 entry limit first-year exposure (associated with rec #3).

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers' recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers.

Reviewers' Recommendation	Program/Faculty Response
Recommendation #1: IR program remain in existence for at least six more years There is too much value to the University in this program to allow it to be discontinued without a serious attempt to make it work on a sustainable basis, which inter alia will entail assuring each core department that the program contributes to rather than undermines its own interests.	**Program:** We are grateful for the thorough report of the program's external reviewers and agree with their assessment that the joint IR program constitutes an important educational asset to Western. As the report points out, there are challenges in managing the differing perspectives and interests of the two constituent departments. Nonetheless, we will make a serious effort to achieve departmental cooperation and enhance the program's operation. **Faculty:** The Faculty of Social Science values the IR program and hopes that it will continue and flourish. We therefore support both History and Political Science to find a cooperative structure for the program.
Recommendation #2: Target 70 to 100 students as its ideal and attainable size. An enrolment of this size would allow the program to protect the cohort and capstone quality that students and faculty pointed to as a strength of the program.	**Program:** The recommendation of a program size of 70 to 100 students is both sensible and achievable. Such an enrolment number supports Western's interest in strategic growth but also ensures that students continue to experience community. IR wants to grow but also wants its students to 'belong and thrive'. We imagine a slightly larger 2nd year cohort and recognize that a 4th-year IR cohort beyond 25 students may require multiple sections of the project-based capstone and so might not be feasible in terms of faculty resource allocation. **Faculty:** The decanal office supports the growth outlined in the program response. We will support recruitment efforts, for example by increasing the visibility of IR at Fall Preview Day and the March Open House, and promoting it at events such as the Ontario University Fair.

Recommendation #3: Maintain its Year-2 direct entry option. Initiatives such as the revised website, expanded alumni and LinkedIn connections, recruiting at open houses and by each department, and the engagement of students (AIR appears to be very active and invested in the program) all point to a capacity to attract and maintain a sustainable program enrolment.	**Program:** Year 2 direct entry should be maintained as current practice. The program will continue to raise its profile among first-year students. During 2025/26 we have launched a new initiative which allowed IR students in year 2 to bring interested friends to extra-curricular, career, and networking IR events. We have also expanded our engagement opportunities during the Intent to Register period through direct program presentations in large first-year lecture classes. While such efforts are time-consuming, they are also effective. We are confident that we will be able to grow our cohort by another 25% for the incoming class in the fall of 2026. The USC student club AIR plays a central role in those recruitment efforts. **Faculty:** The decanal office encourages both Political Science and History to promote IR in their first-year courses. Academic Advising can also remind students of the IR option during Intent to Register in February and March.
Recommendation #4: Institutionalize its student-engagement efforts to further reinvigorate the program. Continue the various research, career and networking, and co-op and exchange initiatives that have been offered to students. We heard from various people that sustainable co-op/exchange pipelines can be fostered with the Co-op Office & Western International. We also heard separately from many different people about valuable ideas they have for the program.	**Program:** Student engagement efforts are essential for the further re-invigoration of the program. During the academic year 2025/26 we continued with our annual cycle of activities; in the fall we hosted the Western Lecture in International Relations and held our research symposium on Memory and Commemoration of World War Two in IR. In the winter semester we organized an art exhibit at Weldon, hosted a symposium on art and IR, organized a special career seminar on war crimes prosecution, organized an IR essay competition and an end of year celebration. In addition, students were invited to 12 bi-weekly IR coffee hours. Our students made extensive use of those extra-curricular learning opportunities. The annual cycle of activities in the IR program requires around CND $8,000-$10,000 – most of the funding in the past came from the Student Donation Fund. In 2026-27, the Dean's Office will provide us with funding at levels previously acquired by SDF. We cannot know how much money will be available through SDF in the future. **Faculty:** The decanal office will continue our funding commitment via the Student Donation Fund. We also encourage the IR Program Director to reach out to the Social Science Co-op group and Career Services, which has dedicated Social Science staff. Class visits or career events can be arranged through them.

Recommendation #5: Consider making ECON 1022 a Year 1 prerequisite for admission to the IR program. There is merit in making ECON 1022 a prerequisite, rather than incorporating Economics classes into the program itself, is that the IR module is already heavy, and it is not clear where course requirements within it could be deleted.	**Program:** This recommendation reflects one of the most widely expressed requests by our students and alumni and would help to better prepare our students for graduate training in International Relations. We will explore its possible implementation. We recognize that making Economics 1022A/B a year 1 prerequisite may impact projected admission numbers. We also acknowledge some students may not learn about IR and its requirements until winter of year 1. We agree to consider some flexibility for program entry in year 2 (with special permission) for those who did not complete Economics 1022A/B in year 1 but are enrolling in it for year 2. We can consider excluding the Economics 1022A/B grade from the average of courses required for admission to IR. **Faculty:** The decanal office fully supports this idea, but suggests that the program consider making Economics 1022A/B not an admission requirement, but a requirement to complete the program, which means the course could be taken at some time other than Year 1.
Recommendation #6: Maintain its extra-curricular career and professionalization focus, rather than add a Year 3 credit on "IR Careers & Professional Practice." The idea of a careers course in Year 3 is attractive in the abstract. It would provide a "bridging" course between the Years 2 and 4 courses the students take. We were very impressed with the alumni workshops, applied projects, integration of co-op and other experiential learning opportunities, and other professionalization resources already offered to students.	**Program:** The program will not create a new year 3 credit on IR Careers and Professional Practice at this time. We will continue to use extra-curricular, career, and professional events to cover this content. Over the last three years, IR has devoted resources to institutionalize an annual career workshop in the winter semester. The first event featured senior leaders from diplomacy and NGOs; the second event showcased successful IR graduates in diplomacy, law, and public administration; the most recent career seminar featured Norman Farrell, Canada's most experienced war crimes prosecutor. We have also organized regular consultations with the Social Science Co-op Office, and our collaborative initiative with Social Science and the Canadian Forces created two dedicated co-op positions with the CF in 2026. Experiential learning opportunities remain a focus of IR's career preparation program. **Faculty:** The decanal office supports the initiatives outlined in the program response.

Recommendation #7: Maintain one integrated capstone with an alternating departmental host OR two synchronized sections in high-demand years. Tutorials and/or a joint symposium could supplement, or even constitute, the capstone depending on faculty member's pedagogical goals and approaches. This recommendation would avoid a full team-taught model (where faculty only receive half-credit) and help each department balance its contribution to the IR program with staffing its own respective programs.	**Program:** The program will discuss this recommendation with both contributing departments. The current director, two department chairs, and two undergraduate chairs have discussed the possibility of creating a 0.5 capstone course, one that is project-based and has common learning objectives agreed to by both departments (i.e. 3-4 weeks of content and a group project that changes each year so that it will be similar in format year-to-year). That course would be taught annually by either one History or one Political Science faculty (to avoid the challenge of receiving half-credit), ideally in an alternating manner (i.e. History in 2027-28, Political Science in 2028-29, History in 2029-30). Possibly there could be an interdisciplinary panel to hear presentations on the projects. This plan would allow students to wrestle with real world problems in International Relations and possibly present their work to an interdisciplinary academic audience. This is one option; further discussion may yield other sustainable solutions that are also workable in terms of faculty resource allocation. **Faculty:** The decanal office fully supports the idea outlined in the program response.
Recommendation #8: Seek ways to balance or streamline the course eligibility and offerings of each department to provide for greater program coherence. We would recommend that the list of eligible History courses be evaluated and perhaps narrowed. Where possible, the two departments could coordinate their course planning to ensure IR students have as cohesive an array of course offerings as possible each year from which to choose. Another curricular possibility is a cross-listed course in Year 2 or 3, which would further emphasize the	**Program:** The program recognizes, as the report described, that there are a variety of perspectives on IR as a subject of study both between and within Political Science and History. Students will learn about these differences by taking a variety of required and elective courses. We also recognize the advantage of greater program coherence. The History Department will re-evaluate and may reduce the number of courses on their list of IR eligible courses in year 3 and year 4. The Political Science Department will re-evaluate program requirements and may make IR2704 and IR4704 (depending on the outcome of discussions regarding Recommendation #7) mandatory again. For curricular coherence, we will also collectively evaluate the content of the three required year 2 courses for the IR module, recognizing their dual curricular and cohort-building goals. Each department promises to schedule and teach the required courses for the modules. At the same time, we must recognize that efforts to ensure curricular coherence will sometimes be limited by scheduling or personnel constraints, both in terms of instructor availability and student schedules. **Faculty:** The decanal office supports the initiatives described in the program response.

joint and cohort experience of the program.	
Recommendation #9: Revise its governance structure. We would recommend that the program adopt a model of Co-Directors, one from each department. Such a shared governance model would ensure continued leadership and involvement from both partner departments, reduce the workload of the current Director position, facilitate succession planning, and reinvigorate the "joint" nature of this program of which the students spoke so highly. If a Director and Associate Director model is preferable, then that could nonetheless achieve the same goal.	**Program:** The program welcomes the report's recommendations on governance reform. To ensure program coherence and ongoing cooperation we prefer the model of IR Director and Associate Director. An effective rotational term is three years after which the Associate Director normally would become the next Director of the program. The Director or Directors will be advised by an IR Advisory Committee which may include a staff member, a student, an alumnus, the undergraduate chairs, and the IR Director or Directors. The administrative home of the program will follow the director. Since the current IR Director is stepping down on June 30, 2026, we are actively seeking individuals willing to serve as Director and Associate Director. **Faculty:** In conversation with the Department Chairs in both Political Science and History, we agree that this is the best solution. If either Department is unable to fill those roles, as an undergraduate module the Undergraduate Chair in each Department can be responsible.
Recommendation #10: **Support Program Leaders with a stipend or indirectly via release-time funding/course releases.**	**Program:** This recommendation is dependent on the Faculty of Social Science Dean's Office. We have been informed that a stipend for a full-time faculty member does not fit the university's policy for such a role; undergraduate chairs and graduate chairs have more responsibility but do not receive a stipend. A course release has not typically been granted for this role. While it may be difficult to secure a director or co-directors without a course release, the Dean confirmed in a meeting on April 2 with both department chairs and the Associate Dean (Undergraduate) that a course release for a single program director will not be approved at this time. Such duties would count toward a full-time faculty member's service activity. **Faculty:** It is indeed correct that during the current budgetary environment, we cannot support a stipend or a course release. As IR is in essence a module, we cannot offer

	stipends or course releases at the module level, but ask that administrative tasks are regulated through the respective Undergraduate Chairs in each department (who receive course release) and be recognized in the Program Director's annual performance evaluation.
Recommendation #11: Provide the necessary infrastructure for the program's strategic growth This might include the assignment of graduate TA/tutorial support, the creation of an IR Student Experience staff role (or perhaps streamlining of IR program staff responsibilities), annual course eligibility reviews, and support for the continuation of ongoing program-building efforts such as the website, alumni page, and experiential learning opportunities, among others.	**Program:** This recommendation is again dependent on the Faculty of Social Science Dean's Office. The program has the infrastructure and requires continued infrastructural support. This is particularly important given that the administrative home for the program alternates based on the home department of the IR Director. GTA marker support from the departments will depend on the size of the class, marking needs, and the availability of GTA resources. **Faculty:** As for Recommendation 10, such support is unfortunately not possible at the level of a module. Both departments have staffing that already have responsibility for such tasks. Moreover, the Faculty of Social Science has dedicated Student Experience support for career and experiential learning matters.
Recommendation #12: Consideration be given to combining the roles of Director/Associate Director with each Department's Undergraduate Chair responsibilities If a program committee was also to be created, as suggested above, then it could provide the "IR-specific" input necessary when the Associate Chairs are specialists in non-IR History or Political Science fields.	**Program:** In practice, Undergraduate Chairs are already involved in the program; they will continue to handle the SOC (course approval) process through EPC, timetabling, transcript evaluations and other routine duties currently under their purview. We do feel that for IR to be a distinct program it requires its own distinct leadership. As to governance reform, we prefer the Director/Associate Director model outlined in recommendations #9 and will seek its implementation starting fall of 2026. The Dean has indicated that if the programs are unable to secure a Director (or Director and Associate Director), leadership of IR would fall to the two Undergraduate Chairs from History and Political Science. **Faculty:** The decanal office agrees with the program response.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Program Chair, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty are responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan. Recommendations #10 and #11 have not been included in the Implementation Plan as they will not be actioned, as outlined in the responses summarized above.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation #1: Remain in existence for at least six more years.	• Hold a meeting or series of meetings during the 2026 fall term to discuss program development and the implementation of the external review recommendations. • Support both History and Political Science to find a cooperative structure for the program.	Department Chairs; Dean's Office	By January 2027
Recommendation #2: Target 70 to 100 students as its ideal and attainable size.	• Support recruitment efforts, for example by increasing the visibility of IR at Fall Preview Day and March Open House, and promoting it at events such as the Ontario Universities' Fair. • Aim to reach 70 students by fall 2028.	Program Director; Department Chairs; Dean's Office	By September 2028
Recommendation #3: Maintain its Year-2 direct entry option.	• Expand engagement opportunities during the Intent to Register period through direct program presentations in large first-year lecture classes. ○ Promote IR in Political Science and History first-year courses. • Academic Advising to remind students of the IR option during Intent to Register in February and March.	Program Director; Undergraduate Chairs; Academic Advisors	By September 2027
Recommendation #4: Institutionalize its student-engagement efforts to further reinvigorate the program.	• Coordinate with the IR student club AIR, and write SDF applications for new activities to ensure continued high level program engagement events. • The Dean's office to continue our funding commitment via the Student Donation Fund.	Dean's Office; Program Director	Check in on progress report in June 2029

Recommendation #5: Consider making Economics 1022A/B a Year 1 prerequisite for admission to the IR program.	• Explore making Economics 1022A/B a year 1 prerequisite (or program completion requirement), and consider flexibility for program entry in year 2, for those that did not complete Economics 1022A/B in year 1. • Consider excluding the Economics 1022A/B grade from the average of courses required for admission to the program.	Program Director	Decision by December 2026
Recommendation #6: Maintain its extra-curricular career and professionalization focus, rather than add a Year 3 credit on "IR Careers & Professional Practice."	• Rather than create a new year 3 credit on IR Careers and Professional Practice, continue to use extra-curricular, career, and professional events to cover this content.	Program Director	Check in on progress report in June 2029
Recommendation #7: Maintain one integrated capstone with an alternating departmental host OR two synchronized sections in high-demand years.	• Create a 0.5 capstone course, one that is project-based and has common learning objectives agreed to by both departments. • Teach capstone annually by either one History or one Political Science faculty (to avoid the challenge of receiving half-credit), ideally in an alternating manner. • Discuss other sustainable solutions that are also workable in terms of faculty resource allocation.	Program Director; Department Chairs; Undergraduate Chairs	By September 2027
Recommendation #8: Seek ways to balance or streamline the course eligibility and offerings of each department to provide for greater program coherence.	• The History Department will re-evaluate and may reduce the number of courses on their list of IR eligible courses in year 3 and year 4. • The Political Science Department will re-evaluate program requirements and may make International Relations 2704F/G and International Relations 4704F/G mandatory again. • Collectively evaluate the content of the three required year 2 courses for the IR module. • Each department promises to schedule and teach the required courses for the modules.	Program Director; Department Chairs; Undergraduate Chairs	By September 2027

Recommendation #9: Revise its governance structure.	• Implement governance model with a Director and Associate Director • Setup permanent IR Advisory Committee to advise leadership.	Department Chairs; Undergraduate Chairs	By January 2027
Recommendation #12: Combine the roles of Director/Associate Director with each Department's Undergraduate Chair responsibilities.	• Implement this recommendation only if the programs are unable to secure a dedicated Director (or Director and Associate Director).	Department Chairs	By September 2026 (should conditions be met)