Faculty / Affiliated University College	Social Sciences
Degrees Offered	Master of Public Administration (MPA) Graduate Diploma in Public Administration (GDip)
Date of Last Review	2014-2015
Approved Fields	None
External Reviewers	Chris Gore, Department of Politics & Public Administration, Toronto Metropolitan University	Eric S. Zeemering, School of Public & International Affairs, University of Georgia
Internal Reviewers	Kevin Mooney, Associate Dean (Graduate) Faculty of Music	Julia Brott, PhD Candidate in Anatomy and Cell Biology
Date of Site Visit	March 6 & 7, 2023
Date Review Report Received	April 5, 2023
Date Program & Faculty Response Received	Program – April 26, 2023 Faculty – April 25, 2023
Evaluation	Good Quality
Approval Dates	SUPR-G: September 11, 2023 ACA: October 4, 2023 Senate: October 13, 2023
Year of Next Review	2030-2031
Progress Report	June 2026

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 Public Administration Program delivered by the Faculty of Social Sciences.

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 Sciences.

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 Senate Graduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-G) and 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 graduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Public Administration Program, the Faculty of Social Science, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), and SUPR-G.

Executive Summary

Housed within the Department of Political Science, the Public Administration Program is an interdisciplinary professional program, considered to be Canada's only graduate-level public administration program focused on local government. The roots of the program date back to 1974 with the creation of a Diploma in Public Administration for local government professionals. In 1991, the program began offering a Master of Public Administration degree. In 2016, a new Graduate Diploma in Public Administration (GDip) was created, with a permanent online GDip established in 2021. Total enrollments in 2020-21 consisted of 11 full-time and 71 part-time students in the MPA, and 88 students in the GDip.

The self-study for this review consisted largely of three main components: 1) consultations with members of the Local Government Program Advisory Council (LGAC) in January and July 2022, 2) surveys of current students (n=29) and alumni (n=125), and 3) a program debrief with graduating MPA students enrolled in the Issues in Local Government course (PA 9917) in June 2022.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Public Administration Program. They offer six recommendations with multiple considerations for further enhancement.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- MPA and GDip alumni testimonials highlighted that: 1) skills and connections acquired contribute to policy development, governance and community engagement in a meaningful way; and 2) blending of full-time and part-time students who work in different fields within the public sector provides invaluable networking and a unique combination of academic with practical experience.
- Flexible program offerings, strong connections between theory and practice embedded in the curriculum, and municipal partnerships with local governments across Ontario and beyond align well with many of the themes from Western's Strategic Plan.
- The full-time MPA has a very high placement rate; most students are employed in related fields before or shortly after graduation.
- Notable features of the MPA curriculum include: 1) the balance of theory and applied professional skills; 2) Mix of full-time and part-time learners across courses; 3) flexible scheduling of courses to maximize accessibility and convenience for local government professionals; and 4) small class sizes which facilitates group-based learning, professional networking and community-building opportunities.
- Notable features of the GDip curriculum include: 1) combining academic rigor with an applied approach that focuses on administration and management in a local government environment; 2) assessment methods that allow students to

apply learning directly to practical policy problems in their workplaces; and 3) Seminar-style classes that bring together students from many different local government settings, allowing for intensive mutual learning and networking.
- Strong and extensive alumni network, many of whom hold senior positions in municipalities and provincial governments across the country – in 2017, the Alumni Society was awarded the Spirit of Western Award for significant contributions to the program and the profession.

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program

- Heavy reliance on limited-duties instructors creates some challenges for program delivery and governance.
- Increasing number of admission offer declines creates more work and extends the admissions period.
- Reduction in scholarship money seems to have put the program at a slight competitive disadvantage compared to other programs that are able to offer more money.
- Feedback from students indicates that some would like more emphasis on practical application and to be taught about more technical aspects of disciplines like finance, law, and planning.
- Workload associated with the final paper for both students and supervisors is heavy.
  - o The requirement for students to receive approval from the Ethics Office for surveys and interviews (for the final MPA Research Report) has created challenges for students, supervisors, and the program.
- Possibility of hybrid program delivery options could provide increased accessibility for students.
- Utilization of Western's Downtown Campus could: 1) enhance the teaching and learning experience via access to more interactive classrooms and collaborative space; and 2) provide greater proximity to community partners and more accessibility for professional students.
  - o While students expressed support for the program's eventual move to the downtown campus, they shared concerns about affordability issues regarding accommodations and parking, and that they enjoy spending time on campus.

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 virtually (due to pandemic restrictions) over two days with the:

- Vice-Provost of the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Associate Vice-Provost of the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Director, Office of Academic Quality & Enhancement
- Associate Vice-Provost, Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty
- Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences
- Associate Dean, Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs
- Department Chair
- Program Director
- Local Government Committee, Local Government Advisory Council & Admissions Committee Members
- Associate University Librarian
- Graduate Program and Department Staff
- Program Faculty Members
- Graduate Students
- Program Alumni

Following the virtual 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 Final Assessment Report (FAR) of the Public Administration Program. The FAR is collated and submitted to the SGPS and to SUPR-G by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers' Report

External reviewers shared that *"over several decades, the [program] has and continues to be recognized as a centre of excellence in research on local governments in Canada, and as a preeminent centre of training for post-baccalaureate students interested in advancing knowledge on local government."*

Strengths of the Program

- The program is a national leader in public administration education and building relationships with local governments and municipal governments.

- Range of delivery options that meet the needs of students. For instance, in-person evening, weekend, week-long intensive courses.
- The core faculty group has sustained research records, with outputs in high quality peer-reviewed outlets, and strong evidence of success in winning external research grants relating to municipal government and administration.
- The program recognizes and has taken steps, with limited resources, to diversify its teaching complement, and to informally integrate modules and learning opportunities that match the Indigenous and EDI initiatives of the university, and to respond to the social and political urgency of these issues for Ontario and Canada.
- The opportunity created by the program to ladder from the GDip to the MPA degree program enhances accessibility and also allows faculty to assess the potential for student success in the full MPA program.
- Strong alumni network enhances the program.

Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement

- Heavy reliance on three faculty members, retired faculty and part-time instructors present challenges in the supervision of students in relation to the major research paper.
- A strategic recruiting and enrollment plan is needed to aid the program in forecasting demand by credential (GDip / MPA) and modality (online / in-person).
- A more comprehensive program assessment plan could aid program leaders monitor consistency in the delivery of curriculum as well as any changes to program structure.
- Refining the alignment of program-level learning outcomes to course-level student learning outcomes across all course syllabi is necessary in ensuring that program-level learning outcomes are achieved and consistent across course sections.
    - A more detailed mapping of outcomes to courses may aid with the assessment and future planning of curriculum.
- Building on preliminary work, carefully and strategically considering how to further integrate the university's strategic priorities related to equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation into program operations and curriculum.
- Should the program succeed in attracting international students; the global context for local government administration may require elaboration within the student learning outcomes and curriculum.
- Student funding is low in comparison with other programs.
- Faculty member resources are being spread thin with respect to supporting the program and the innovations and growth it wishes to undertake.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers' recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers. Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Reviewers' Recommendation	Program/Faculty Response
Recommendation #1*: **Faculty and instructor resources** Develop a long-term strategy to ensure sustainable number of full-time faculty and practitioners. The strategy should consider: 1a) the balance between full-time faculty and practitioners in delivering a theoretically rigorous and practically relevant program, including existing or potential innovations; 1b) incentives to engage the participation of faculty from other teaching units, including Political Science; 1c) avenues to reduce the workload of the two core faculty members and Program Director; 1d) making the Program Director's workload comparable with other programs at Western and other universities.	**Program:** The program would benefit from additional instructor resources and will continue to advocate to the Dean of Social Science for more resources. Discussion of program changes to reduce workload is included in the response to recommendation four. In terms of course rationalization – and based on both the self-study and the reviewers' recommendations – the Program Committee and the Advisory Council are exploring the option of changing the MPA from a fully in-person program to a hybrid program. In addition to expanding the geographical reach of the MPA, moving to a hybrid program may also result in reducing the number of times the four required MPA-GDip courses (9901, 9902, 9903, and 9904) are offered each year, from three to two. **Faculty:** The Dean, or designate, will meet with the Director and Chair of Political science to discuss all four considerations. • 1a) In terms of FSS professional programs, currently the MPA and GDip in Public Administration have a relatively high proportion of full-time faculty participation. • 1c) Course rationalization should be discussed by the Program Committee and Advisory Council, if major modifications are to be considered.
Recommendation #2*: **Program and curriculum assessment** Review, regularize, improve and implement program-level assessment measures to evaluate program effectiveness. Consider: 2a) a yearly student exit survey which is designed to seek feedback on program goals and outcomes. 2b) how program assessment shapes curriculum change, including the role of a course or course content. 2c) how and where the curriculum is responding to emerging issues in local government	**Program:** For the past two years, the program participated in the Faculty of Social Science's exit survey on student experiences and demographics which, in addition to having standard questions that apply across all programs, also allow for programs to develop their own questions. The program-specific questions do relate to program goals and outcomes; however, the program will review questions and consider drafting different or additional questions in the advance of the next rollout of the survey, both to ensure that program goals are being met and that the curriculum continues to respond to emerging issues in local government administration. The Program Director will work with the Program Committee, the Advisory Council, the Chair and Associate Dean and faculty to: 1) address various issues identified in this review, including the recommendations in this section related to program and curriculum

administration, and how these issues will be integrated into curriculum routinely. 2d) how part-time instructors are mentored or trained to review their course content in relation to program-level goals and curriculum assessment.	assessment; 2) ensure that student learning outcomes are included in all course syllabi. **Faculty:** Sub recommendations 2a to 2c are to be discussed by the Program Committee and Advisory Council in consultation with the Chair and Associate Dean. • 2a) These two programs are already participating in an exit survey pilot program within the Faculty.
Recommendation #3*: **Recruitment and enrolment** Conduct an evaluation of the market for new students and effectiveness of existing recruitment strategies. Consider: 3a) program's emphasis on mid-career and professional learning is attracting all of the students the program wishes to recruit; 3b) the geographic, racial and professional target audience with the view of diversifying the student body. 3c) how the MPA and GDip are marketed and differentiated, particularly in relation to the laddering opportunities between the GDip and MPA, and the flexibility of learning. 3d) funding support for MPA students in comparison with professional and non-professional graduate students at Western and competing programs in Ontario.	**Program:** The quantity and quality of applicants across all programs remains high; however, the acceptance rate for the full-time MPA has been lower than usual for the past few years. There is strong demand for the GDip and part-time MPA among mid-career professionals, and, in most years, there were more qualified applicants than available spots. The program has reliable ways of reaching mid-career applicants, through the connections with the municipal sector and extensive network of alumni. The new GDip-MPA laddering option is also proving to be quite popular with eight students taking advantage of it in its first year. Targeting potential full-time MPA students has always been more challenging. Newly acquired information from the SGPS voluntary equity form and the Faculty exit survey will be used towards these efforts. The Program Director will work with the graduate assistant to ensure that the marketing strategies is not excluding any potential applicants. The program is presently reviewing data from 2018 - about comparator and competing programs in Ontario and beyond. This information will be used to inform discussions about funding and decisions regarding the major paper milestone. **Faculty:** Sub recommendations 3a to 3c are to be discussed by the Program Committee and the Advisory Councils in consultation with Chair and Associate Dean. • 3b. Newly available information from both the Faculty exit survey and applicant diversity information now being collected by SGPS will be helpful. • 3d. The MPA applicants/students have similar opportunities to other professional programs in the Faculty. Dean, Associate Dean Graduate, Chair and Director to discuss availability of bursaries to conduct a more formalized assessment.

Recommendation #4*: **Major paper** Review whether the goal of the major paper required for the GDip and MPA students is necessary and/or needs to be modified. Consider: 4a) the necessity of including primary research or data to meet program goals and learning outcomes. 4b) how changes to the major paper might reduce faculty and program director workload. 4c) whether an existing course could be modified to require a shortened paper, therefore eliminating the need for individual faculty or paper supervisors. 4d) whether GDip students can have a 'capstone' assignment that can be used to differentiate the final output of the GDip from the MPA.	**Program:** Based on the data from comparator and competing programs, the Program Director and two core faculty will meet to discuss ways to eliminate the need for individual supervision for the major paper requirement for both the GDip and MPA. These proposals will then be discussed by the Program Committee and Advisory Council before being brought forward as major modifications. The current thinking is that for the MPA, a modified research paper will become the major output for PA 9917 – Issues in Local Government. This course is already taught by the Program Director, so no additional resources would be required. For the GDip, the final paper, which is already classified as a course, will be assigned to a single instructor for an entire class cohort, and the requirements will be modified. The major output will either be a shortened research paper or some other type of capstone assignment. This course will then require only one instructor rather than an individual supervisor for each student research project. **Faculty**: Sub recommendations 4a to 4c are to be discussed by the Program Committee and Advisory Council in consultation with Chair and Associate Dean. The requirement of assigning supervisors to this program component may not be the optimal use of human resources in the Department/Program.
Recommendation #5*: **Advisory committee** Evaluate the role, effectiveness and membership of the Local Government Advisory Council (LGAC). Consider: 5a) expanding the membership of the LGAC to provide guidance on curriculum, marketing, recruitment and fundraising. 5b) the composition, and possible expansion, of the LGAC to ensure that the members offer expertise, lived experiences, and knowledge about equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenous governance.	**Program:** The Advisory Council is composed of all program instructors (both full- and part-time), three student representatives, a representative from the Alumni Society, and three external professional members recruited by the Program Director. As most members effectively serve on a voluntary basis, the Program Director tries to be mindful about how much is asked of the LGAC. One of the current external members did join with the expressed intent of bringing an EDID perspective to the council. In addition to formalizing this role, the program can seek advice from the Offices of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Indigenous Initiatives. Additionally, efforts were made to recruit and hire candidates through an EDIAD lens for two open limited duties hires in 2022/2023. Insofar as these instructors are also part of the Advisory Council, this does help to improve its representativeness. The program needs to be mindful of adding to the unpaid, representative burden placed on individuals from under-represented groups. **Faculty:** Sub recommendations 5a and 5b are to be discussed by the Program Committee and Advisory Council in consultation with Chair and Associate Dean. The Committees are encouraged to consider longer-format sessions to address the various issues in this review – ½ and full-day retreat(s).

Recommendation #6*:	Program: The Program Director will reach out to Western's Office of Equity, Diversity, and
Recommendation #6*: **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenous governance** Undertake a strategic review of the program to understand how equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and Indigenous rights and governance are included or represented. For instance, consult with Western University's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives for guidance to review how EDI and Indigenization are integrated into and/or relate to: • student recruitment • faculty and instructor recruitment • curriculum design and pedagogical approaches • advisory council membership • community outreach	**Program:** The Program Director will reach out to Western's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Office of Indigenous Initiatives on the points raised by the reviewers. Discussions on these issues will also continue through the LGP Committee and LGP Advisory Council. Prior collaborations exist, for instance when the program worked with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives in June 2022 to invite two Indigenous community members as guest speakers and to facilitate a smudge ceremony. The Program Director and graduate assistant also attend monthly Social Science Grad Council meetings and sessions with the SGPS where EDIAD topics are often on the agenda. The Faculty of Social Science exit survey is one example of an output associated with these discussions. So, too, is the voluntary equity form now included as part of the application process. The sense now, at least from the most recent Grad Council meeting in April 2023, is that the Faculty of Social Science needs more direction from the SGPS and/or to develop its own more robust policies about how to interpret and operationalize these data. **Faculty:** This recommendation will be discussed by the Program Committee and Advisory Council in consultation with Chair, Associate Dean, OEDI, and OII.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Graduate Program Chair, in consultation with the SGPS and the Dean of the Faculty is responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation #1: Faculty and instructor resources Develop a long-term strategy to ensure a sustainable number of full-time faculty and practitioners.	Develop a long-term sustainability strategy, jointly between program and Faculty representatives, taking into consideration forecasted program growth and changes/innovations. Examine the possibility of changing the MPA from a fully in-person program to a hybrid program. In particular, offering a hybrid option for the four required MPA-GDip courses - 9901, 9902, 9903, and 9904 to reduce the number of times each are offered each year.	Program Director Department Chair Associate Dean Program Committee Advisory Committee	By September 2025
Recommendation #2: Program and curriculum assessment Review, regularize, improve and implement program-level assessment measures to evaluate program effectiveness.	Develop a plan with relevant Committees and Faculty stakeholders to address issues in the recommendation pertaining to program and curriculum assessment. Review current exit survey questions to assess whether these effectively prompt student feedback on relevant program components and experiences - prior to the next rollout of the survey. Work toward ensuring that student learning outcomes are included in all course syllabi.	Program Director Department Chair Associate Dean Program Committee Advisory Committee	By June 2025 By June 2024 By December 2023
Recommendation #3: Recruitment and enrolment Conduct an evaluation of the market for new students and effectiveness of existing recruitment strategies.	Evaluate the demand for the full-time MPA group and, if applicable, develop strategies to target and fund potential full-time MPA students as informed by newly acquired information from the SGPS voluntary equity form and the Faculty exit survey. • Ensure that the program's marketing strategies are not excluding any potential applicants.	Program Director Department Chair Associate Dean Program Committee Advisory Committee	By June 2025

	Refer to comparator and competing program data to help frame discussions with the Faculty regarding funding support for students.		
Recommendation #4: Major paper Review whether the goal of the major paper required for the GDip and MPA students is necessary and/or needs to be modified.	Using data from comparator and competing programs, examine feasibility of eliminating the need for individual supervision for the major paper requirement for both the GDip and MPA. For instance: • the major output for PA 9917 (MPA course) could be a modified research paper. • the GDip final paper could be assigned to a single instructor for an entire class cohort, and would either be a shortened research paper or some other type of capstone assignment. Develop and present a proposal to relevant Committees, which may subsequently be submitted as a major modification.	Program Director Program Committee Advisory Committee	By July 2024
Recommendation #5: Advisory committee Evaluate the role, effectiveness and membership of the Local Government Advisory Council (LGAC).	Formalize the new role (bringing an EDID perspective) on the LGAC Committee, and seek advice from the Offices of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Indigenous Initiatives. As the Committee convenes to discuss the results of the program's review, consider longer-format sessions to address the various issues in this review – for instance, a half or full-day retreat.	Program Director Advisory Committee	<mark>By Dec 2024</mark>
Recommendation #6: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenous governance Undertake a strategic review of the program to understand how equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and Indigenous rights and governance are included or represented.	Review how EDID is integrated in program operations and curriculum and consult Western's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Office of Indigenous Initiatives for support as needed. - A support resource that may be helpful in initiating this review can be accessed on the OAQE website here. Jointly with other programs in the Faculty, develop policies about how to interpret and operationalize data EDID data from the voluntary equity form and exit survey.	Program Director Department Chair Associate Dean Program Committee Advisory Committee	<mark>By Dec 2024</mark>