Western UNIVERSITY · CANADA

Political Science
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan
March 2021

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Social Science	
Degrees Offered	M.A.; Ph.D.	
Date of Last Review	2015-2016	
Approved Fields	• Canadian Politics • Comparative Politics • International Relations • Local Government (proposing name change later in document to Urban Politics and Local Governance) • Political Theory	**Changed as part of review** • Canadian Politics • Comparative Politics • International Relations • Urban Politics and Local Governance) • Political Theory
External Consultants	Dr. Lawrence LeDuc, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto Dr. Stuart Soroka, Professor of Communication and Media & Political Science, University of Michigan	
Internal Reviewer	Dr. Mark Zbaracki, Richard Ivey School of Business Mohammed Estaiteyeh, Graduate Student	
Date of Site Visit	Feb 8-9, 2021 (Virtual visit)	
Date Review Report Received	February 22, 2021	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program - February 25, 2021 Dean - February 25, 2021	
Evaluation	**Good Quality**	
Approval Dates	SUPR-G: April 12, 2021 SCAPA (rating approval, and academic program change recommendation): April 28, 2021 Senate (FYI for program recommendation, approval for academic program changes): May 14, 2021	
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review- 2028-2029	

Overview of Western's Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), adopted on May 11, 2011, and revised June 22, 2012, this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses and assessment and evaluation of the **Political Science** Graduate Program delivered by the Faculty of Social Science.

This report considers the following documents:

- the program's self-study – Volume 1
- the external consultants' report
- responses to the consultants' report by the Departments and Faculty.

This Final Assessment Report identifies the strengths of the program, opportunities for program enhancement, and prioritizes the recommendations of the external consultants. The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the Final Assessment Report that are selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, any action or follow-up that is required, and the timeline for completion.

The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan is sent for approval through SUPR-G and SCAPA, then for information to Senate and the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance and is made available on a publicly accessible location on Western's IQAP website.

The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan is the only document resulting from the Graduate cyclical review process that is made public, all other documents are confidential to the Program/School/Faculty and SUPR-G.

Executive Summary

The Political Science Department has a fulltime faculty complement of 21, including a Canada Research Chair in Political Methodology. The Department offers master's and doctoral level programs in five fields, including Canadian Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Theory, and Local Government (Urban Politics and Local Governance). Faculty members are active researchers who hold external grants that support not only their research but also graduate students learning.

Currently, doctoral students are required to declare two fields (*e.g.*, two of Canadian Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Local Government and Political Theory) and successfully complete a total of 6 graduate courses; the PhD Advanced Research Design course; one additional graduate course elective; the comprehensive examinations in two fields; one cognate skill; a PhD Thesis Proposal; and a Thesis. Average time to completion is 5 to 6 years. The Master's program is 12-month/three-term program with the final project being the thesis option or the coursework/Research Project option. Most students choose the MRP route and complete within 12 months. The Learning Outcomes of both programs are consistent with Western's Graduate Degree Learning Outcomes and provincial expectations.

The cyclical review period provides the opportunity for program change and as part of this review, the Department has proposed a number of changes to the programs (see below) that reflect the current state of the discipline as well as the changing labour market. The goal is

to provide Canada's best training in political methodology so that our students can engage in cutting-edge research in Canadian Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Local Government (Urban Politics and Local Governance). We also hope to build our reputation in the area of political behaviour, which spans Canadian, Comparative, and Local Politics. Finally, our proposed program changes are designed to strengthen our placement record in the academic job market and maintain our success in placing our graduates in high profile non-academic jobs.

Strengths identified by the Political Science Graduate Programs (summarized from the self-study brief)

- MA and PhD collaborative specializations in Transitional Justice, Migration and Ethnic Relations, and Environment and Sustainability
- Advanced political methodology courses
- Strong faculty research record
- Strong graduate student research culture
- Co-authorship norms between graduate students and faculty
- Professional development strategy including funding to students for conference and research-related expenses; student-organized reading groups within the department; Departmental Speaker Series; Doctoral Colloquium and mock job talks
- Library resources

Review Process

Just prior to the cyclical review process, the entire Political Science Department underwent a full external review in its external search for a Department Chair. Information and findings from this review informed the review process for this cyclical review. In addition, a multi-stage process with faculty and senior administration from Social Science and the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies occurred over at least 24 meetings to review the graduate program design, the fields, course curriculum, the Graduate Handbook, the external report from the 2015 external review, and graduate placement statistics. The results of a graduate student survey also informed the process.

During the external review, the committee, comprised of the two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and a doctoral student, were provided with Volume I and II in advance of their visit and then met over two days with:

- Dr. Linda Miller, Vice Provost, School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Dr. Lorraine Davies, Associate Vice Provost, School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Dr. Margaret McGlynn, Vice Provost, Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty
- Dr. Joan Finegan, Acting Dean, Faculty of Social Science
- Dr. Jamie Baxter, Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Science
- Dr. Matt Lebo, Department Chair
- Dr. Christopher Alcantara, Graduate Chair
- Political Science Graduate Committee
- Political Science Graduate Faculty
- Political Science Graduate Students (review team met with 14 or the 44 students)
- Political Science Graduate Program Assistants
- Robert Glushko, Associate Chief Librarian

Following the onsite review, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Graduate Chair and the Dean for review and response.

These formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, the program response and the Dean's response, have formed the basis of this summative assessment report of the **Political Science** Graduate Programs, collated and submitted to SGPS and the Senate Graduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-G) by the Internal Reviewer.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers' Report

Our overall evaluation of the Department, and of the proposed changes to its graduate programs, is positive: we believe that the changes to the MA and PhD programs are clearly laid out and are appropriate and in line with norms in other strong departments in Canada.

Strengths of the Program

- Learning outcomes mapped out in detail and appropriate to the program
- Quantitative and qualitative courses are well-designed and a valuable asset to the program
- Curriculum changes that are well designed to address past concerns (as described below)

Areas of Concern Identified:

- Sustaining 5 full fields for the M.A. and Ph.D. with only 21 faculty, only 4 of which are full professors
- Lack of diversity amongst students and faculty

Major Modifications to be approved as part of the cyclical review process

MA Program Changes -effective fall 2021

1. Delete the MA thesis stream
2 Offer MA students either the Major Research Paper (MRP) stream (6 courses + MRP) or a new course-based stream consisting of 1 course in research design and 6 course electives (3.0 credits). (Both routes requires 3 terms of study over a 12 month period.)

2) Proposed PhD Program Changes – effective fall 2021 (only apply to incoming PhD students)
The updated program involves two key changes and one minor change:

1. New Coursework Requirements: Students will be required to complete 13 graduate courses over the first two years of the PhD program (6.5 credits) to better align with the top programs in Canada, which range between 11-13 courses (5.5 to 6.5 credits). Students will normally complete the 13 courses (6.5 credits) during terms 1-5.
2. New Milestone Requirement – Publishing Workshop: During the Summer of year 1 (Term 3), students will be required to attend and participate in a mandatory publishing workshop.
3. Rename the "Local Government" Field to "Urban Politics and Local Governance" for graduate recruitment and branding purposes only: The new name reflects the scholarly evolution of the field from a narrow focus on local government to a broader inquiry into the governance of cities and the political economy of urbanization.

Under the updated program, students complete their PhD requirements within four years. A typical student will take seven courses in terms 1, 2 and 3 (year 1), the publishing workshop in term 3 (summer of year 1), and six courses in terms 4 and 5 (Fall and Winter of year 2). They will study and write their comprehensive examinations in term 6 (summer of year 2) which will be based on the courses they took in terms 1-5. Terms 7 – 12 (years 3 and 4) will be devoted to writing and defending the dissertation.

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

Reviewers' Recommendation Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*). The process for implementation can be found in the Implementation Plan below. The external reviewers recommend:	**Program/Faculty Response** Please note that in the decanal report, the Dean has only commented on 3 of the recommendations and assigns the responsibility for addressing the remaining recommendations to the program.
1. Modifications to the program structure are well-designed and positive changes and should proceed	Departmental Response: Agreed and scheduled for implementation for Fall 2021
2. Ensure faculty vigilance to improve graduate mentoring and professionalization	Departmental Response: Agreed and implementation in place, including: -faculty retreat planned for June 2021to improve mentorship -Director of Placement to offer more workshops to support students -seeking additional teaching opportunities for students. *Dean - The department too recognizes how important this is. In fact, Matt Lebo, Chair of the Department, won a career award for "Excellence in Mentoring" from the Society for Political Methodology in 2020 and was hired in part because of his expertise in graduate education. Thus, we have great confidence that mentorship will be a big part of a graduate student's education. Towards this end, the department will hold a summer retreat on mentorship.*
3. *Ensure ongoing care in the design of methodology and 'core' sub-field courses in the Department	Department: - will develop a refresher course for students after the comprehensive exams -further discussion at summer retreat
4. Consider the number of fields that can be adequately covered in the PhD program given limited faculty and the need for additional faculty to build on the strengths of the department	Department: Agreed *Dean - We recognize the need of the department to grow and the Faculty of Social Science is committed to making that happen. That said, the effective running of the program is not dependent on faculty hires.*

5. Further develop the diversity of both faculty and graduate students in Political Science.	Department: -commitment to prioritizing diversity when hiring of new faculty and in the training of our students.
6. Funding doctoral students beyond the 4th year is critical if the goal of the Department is to attract the strongest students from Canada and elsewhere	Department: Agreed -under discussion with the dean's office *Dean - While we are sympathetic to the problem, it is not an easy issue to solve. Because Ministry of College and Universities provides grant funding for PhD students for 4 years, all PhD programs are expected to be designed as four-year programs. The problem of funding extends well beyond this particular review.*

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 and/or the Department Chair/Director, in consultation with SGPS and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science will be responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan. The details of progress made will be presented in the Dean's Annual Planning Document.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Ensure ongoing care in the design of methodology and 'core' sub-field courses in the Department.	Create a plan, including Learning Outcomes, that specifically outlines how and when these courses will occur during the student's program.	Graduate Chair and Graduate Committee	September 2021
Incorporate equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and Indigenization principles and actions into all program components, from recruitment to degree completion	Review processes with an EDI and a decolonization and Indigenization lens, and in consultation with SGPS, the offices of the Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives) and the Associate Vice-President (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion)	Graduate Chair and Graduate Committee	September 2024