Ongoing Improvement Progress Report

Instructions and Report Template

As part of the protocols outlined in Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), to facilitate the continuous improvement of academic programs between review cycles, in connection with the Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Implementation Plan, a monitoring process will include an Ongoing Improvement Progress Report. The outcomes of this report will be considered as part of the program's next cyclical review.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the operationalization of the implementation plan following a Cyclical Program Review (or the review of a New Program). This should include a brief summary of actions taken by the Program and the Dean's Office since the completion of the review (usually about three years), as well as an update on the stage of implementation for all applicable items. These include:

- whether the action item(s) are in progress, complete or no longer applicable (with a brief explanation);
- the timelines of each item and how they are progressing or expected to progress, particularly if they are diverting from original timelines in the FAR and Implementation Plan, and;
- a short description of any other program developments and improvements that have taken place following the review.
- For new programs only, an evaluation of the initial administration and resourcing of the program.

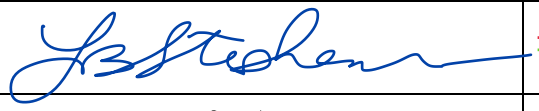
The following report template has been created for the program to report on progress made regarding recommendations presented in the Implementation Plan, and any other relevant program developments and enhancements.

- The program will complete the template and submit it to the faculty Dean's Office for sign-off.
- The program will then submit the completed Ongoing Improvement and Progress Report to the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement (OAQE). Reports are due by June 21, 2024.
    - The OAQE will present all Ongoing Improvement and Progress Reports to SUPR-U/G. Any follow-up questions or concerns will be communicated to the program and Dean's Office by the OAQE.
    - It should be noted that as per the requirements of the province's Quality Council, progress reports will be posted on the reports page of the OAQE website.

Ongoing Improvement Progress Report

Political Science, MA, PhD / Faculty of Social Science

Program	Political Science, MA, PhD	**Faculty / Affiliated University College**	Faculty of Social Science
Approval Dates of the Review	SUPR-G: April 12, 2021 SCAPA: April 28, 2021 Senate: May 14, 2021	**Year of the Next Review**	2028-2029
Link to the Programs Final Assessment Report (FAR)	https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/academic_programs/iqap_reports/social_sciences_grad/2021%20Political%20Science%20Program%20Review.pdf		
If applicable, submission of follow-up report(s)			

	Name	**Signature**	**Date**
Program Chair/Director	Laura Stephenson		~~May 30, 2024~~ May 2, 2024
Dean (or designate)	Elizabeth P. Hayden		May 2, 2024

Progress Update on the Implementation Plan

Recommendation #1	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	Sept 2021

Recommendation Implemented

X Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

The graduate committee compiled information about the graduate program progression timeline, including methodology and "core" subfield courses, as well as each individual learning objective for all of the courses (by course or course type). We had a discussion of these at a department meeting to ensure that all instructors are aware of the expectations when they compile their classes.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

No actions remain to be taken. In preparation for the next program review, the graduate committee can review how well the objectives continue to be met and serve the needs of the students in the program.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #2	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
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	Sept 2024

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No **X** Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? **X** Yes ☐ No

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

Since the Political Science Graduate Program Review in 2021, the committee has considered how to incorporate equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and Indigenization principles into the program. A number of steps have been taken.

1. We have introduced a recruitment workshop, which we advertise to undergraduate students at Western and elsewhere. Priority is given to individuals from equity-seeking groups. The recruitment workshop is intended to demystify graduate school and the application process, to encourage more people to apply. Those who attend the event in person have their application fee to our political science graduate program waived. This event was run in fall 2022 and 2023.
2. We have paid attention to equity during the admissions process, utilizing the information provided on applications. We also pay careful attention to international student applications to identify those with the most potential. The number of offers we have made in the past few years to international students has increased. The diversity of our MA and PhD cohorts has improved.
3. We pay attention to equity issues when assigning teaching assistants, looking for balance and ensuring that all students are receiving equal opportunities to build their skills.
4. At the department level, the chair has been active in encouraging the creation of new courses that cover a greater diversity of topics, including those touching on issues of equity. At the graduate level, the course on Gender and Politics and the one on Global Conflict are part of this initiative.
5. At the department level, the chair has actively encouraged faculty members to pay attention to course content and seek a balance of diverse voices and perspectives. This call to action has been heeded and realized in a number of courses by including material considering alternative viewpoints and emphasizing topics such as decolonization, the experience of Indigenous peoples, race and gender. The successful incorporation of these topics was clarified during our March 2024 department meeting. Most instructors of graduate programs indicated they had made specific efforts to update their curriculum.

6. At the department level, in May 2023 a department retreat was facilitated by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (Lisa Aikman, Heather Campbell and Ken Meadows). The faculty engaged in SOAR exercises intended "to involve all attendees in articulating next steps for the program in advancing EDI-DIA." It was an informative session that got faculty members to consider what challenges and opportunities exist.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

Next steps include considering whether the department can incorporate EDID more explicitly into our learning outcomes and objectives. The next graduate committee will take this on as part of their 2024-25 activities.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Note: The total number of expandable text boxes will be dependent on the number of prioritized recommendations appearing in the program's most recent Final Assessment Report (FAR).

Continuous Program Enhancement

What additional initiatives or changes has the program been working on in relation to continuous program improvement?

The graduate committee has been overseeing the administration of the revised MA and PhD modules. Both have been very successful in terms of recruiting students. Several points of the new program required "fleshing out", such as the Publication Workshop (between Y1 and Y2 of the PhD) and the need to identify courses to be taught during the summer session (required offerings for both MA and PhD students). These have been incorporated into the general planning of the department. The graduate committee has also focused on building community at the PhD level with "coffee hours", informal sessions that bring together students at all levels so

that they can network, learn from each other, and ask questions of the graduate chair and other faculty members that attend. At the MA level, we have also run sessions with a Career Coach at Western (in Careers & Experience) that helped students to learn what skills on their CVs could be turned into highlights on their resumes.

The graduate committee has also had to take seriously the reviewers' recommendation #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."* In recent years the department has lost several faculty members and had another member on long-time leave – in tenure stream faculty, our department is now 20th in size among Canadian political science departments. Our ability to offer adequate graduate instruction and supervision in the International Relations (IR) subfield has been impacted. In the fall of 2023 we determined we could not accept any additional PhD students in the IR subfield and posted a note to such effect on our website, suspending IR subfield admissions. We know that the Dean, in their response to the 2021 graduate program review, recognized our lean faculty complement (even at that time, prior to recent losses). In the official response that was submitted to the Senate and IQAP the Dean wrote: "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." At this point in time, the effective running of the PhD program in terms of offering the IR subfield has been compromised by our faculty losses and lack of hiring. We look forward to seeing the commitment to growth realized and hope that it will be very soon, as the need has become significantly more urgent.