

**FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**  
**Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review**  
**Political Science**  
**Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

**Date of Review:** March 22 – March 23, 2016

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate programs delivered by the **Department of Political Science**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.*

*The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.*

**Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the  
Undergraduate and Graduate Political Science Programs**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Department of Political Science submitted a self-study in January 2016 to the Associate Vice-President, Faculty to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate programs. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers, one from Ontario and one from Quebec and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, and selected by the Associate Vice-President, Faculty and Associate Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on March 22 – March 23, 2016. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President, Faculty, Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, Chair of the department and meetings with groups of current undergraduate students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Chair of the department and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (October 2016). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

The Final Assessment Report was prepared by the Quality Assurance Committee to be submitted to Undergraduate Council, and Senate (December 2016).

In their report (September 2016), the Review Team found that the “undergraduate and graduate programs perform very well across key indicators and are well governed” and that the “department has leveraged its faculty resources and research strengths to offer a high quality undergraduate program that covers all the major subfields of political science, and a graduate program that builds on its particular research strengths.” The report highlights that the department “has developed a reputation for particular strengths in historical and critical approaches in its graduate programs, while still offering courses and training across a wide range of approaches and methodologies in the field at all levels”.

### **Strengths**

The reviewers noted many strengths within the programs. Along all teaching criteria, alignment of degree level expectations and learning outcomes, and consistency with McMaster’s Mission and Academic Plan, the department performs extremely well. Undergraduate teaching is especially strong. The teaching program has benefited, in particular, from the appointment of two teaching-track faculty, both of whom have won teaching awards. Their skill sets have contributed to growing strengths in innovative teaching and experiential learning. At the graduate level, the department has established a culture of close supervisory and mentor relationships among faculty and students that has contributed to excellent times to completion for the PhD program and very good success on the job market. There are also a large number of opportunities for students to present their work in progress, engage in department and university workshops and conferences, and to collaborate with faculty on research projects.

### **Areas for Improvement**

#### Undergraduate Program

- Decline in total undergraduate enrolment numbers in the five-year period ending 2013-14
- Experience of students in the three-year general BA in Political Science program can be made as positive as that for students in the four-year Honours program
- Website enhancements to profile steps taken for experiential learning and skills development

#### Graduate Program

- Faculty complement as a result of recent retirements and faculty departures
- Inconsistencies in requirements across MA programs in relation to the major research paper for MA International Relations and comprehensive for MA Political Science
- Graduate students need to be prepared for multiple career tracks with enhanced professional development opportunities and workshops within the department
- Professional skills and collaborative research opportunities should be integrated with community partners



2a. Raise caps on course enrolments	U/G Committee will review the existing caps and enrolment numbers as part of an overall and relatively comprehensive reconsideration of the offering and scheduling of courses listed in the course calendar, with an exception of increasing the enrolment numbers as well as the number of courses offered at the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year level. Consistent with this approach is the introduction of a new 2 <sup>nd</sup> year course (PolSci – Force and Fear) that will be offered for the first time in Winter 2017.	Undergraduate Committee	Overall review of U/G course offerings will occur in fall of 2016
2b. Increase number of tutorials that teaching assistants lead from 2 – 3 per week, if permitted under the collective agreement; if not, reducing the number of weeks in which tutorials are held.	The U/G committee will consider this recommendation as part of its overall consideration of the U/G program and will make an explicit recommendation to the department concerning this issue. Consultation will also have to be undertaken with the University and CUPE to determine if such changes can be made within the context of the existing collective agreement.	Undergraduate Committee	Fall 2016
2c. Reduce number of 4 <sup>th</sup> year courses taught in a given year in order to increase 2 <sup>nd</sup> year course offerings.	The U/G Committee will consider this recommendation as part of its overall consideration of the course offerings and scheduling. Existing 2 <sup>nd</sup> year course offerings are consistently offered on an annual basis. Two new 2 <sup>nd</sup> year courses were created this past year (Pol Sci 2C03 Force and Fear and Pol Sci 2U03 Public Policy and Public Administration). One of these courses will be offered in Winter 2017 and the other in the 2017-18 year.	Undergraduate Committee	Fall 2016
<b>Dean's Response:</b> The dean noted that these recommendations make good sense as part of strategy to increase enrolment in political science courses. The dean also noted that the department has already indicated that it will consider these changes this coming year as part of its review of its undergraduate curriculum and the associate dean and the dean will support the department in the process.			
Split the remaining full-	The department has already reduced its full year course offerings	Undergraduate Committee	Fall 2016

year courses	<p>over the last 6 years. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year Public Law class will be split in 2016 to permit greater flexibility in its offering in conjunction with the specialization degree.</p> <p>The U/G Committee will consider splitting remaining courses.</p>		
<p><b>Dean's Response:</b> The dean highlighted that this recommendation is consistent with the broader practice in the Faculty to reduce the number of full-year courses.</p>			
Add more minors, including interdisciplinary minors	<p>The department has recently created a new minor in Justice, Law and Order. The U/G Committee will monitor the impact of this new minor over the next 3 years to determine its success in increasing student enrolment.</p> <p>In 2015, the department proposed a minor in Public Leadership. It was determined at the time that department lacked sufficient faculty resources to introduce and support 2 new minors at the same time. The U/G Committee will likely review and bring the issue of a minor in Public Leadership back to the department in the 2017-18 academic year.</p> <p>The department will continue to consider all requests to have its courses included in interdisciplinary minors</p>	Undergraduate Committee	Ongoing over next 3 years
<p><b>Dean's Response:</b> The dean acknowledged that this recommendation is consistent with broader curriculum approaches that the Faculty is undertaking to create sub-BA designations with which students more readily identify within the disciplinary degree itself and that help position them for careers in which they are interested.</p>			
Administer an exit-survey to 3 year BA program students to diagnose sources of dissatisfaction with their undergraduate experience	<p>2015-16 marks a trial year of administering an electronic exit survey (previously on paper). Issuing the survey electronically has permitted the department to more accurately target both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year graduating students. The U/G Committee will ensure that the exit survey is more fully implemented for all graduating students in the future with specific questions for 3<sup>rd</sup> year graduating students in order to assess their undergraduate experience.</p>	Undergraduate Committee	Work will commence in 2016-17 academic year
<p><b>Dean's Response:</b> The dean noted that the number of BA students is quite small as the Faculty encourages eligible students to enter the Honours</p>			

BA program. As a result, BA enrolments should fall in the coming years. The dean also noted that it is important to identify the source of dissatisfaction of BA students with their experience.			
Experiential Learning and Skills Development – Add an internship in Political Science for course credit	The department has already pursued experiential learning and skills development through the creation of 2 courses – Public Service Leadership and Practice of Politics. The department’s website will be enhanced to more clearly identify the experiential learning and skills development opportunities that these courses provide as well as detailing potential career options for students with political science degrees.  The U/G Committee will consider the creation of an internship and/or work experience based course as part of its curriculum review in the fall of 2016.	Undergraduate Committee	Fall 2016
<b>Dean’s Response:</b> The dean noted that further opportunities for internships and other experiential learning can be pursued through the Faculty’s Experiential Education program. The EE program is working with departments, including political science, to enhance their offerings to respond to this student interest (and broader calls within the province for experiential learning).			
Make more use of new teaching technologies	U/G Committee and/or Chair will invite experts from the MacPherson Institute and Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) to make a presentation at a department meeting as well as provide overall assistance to faculty members interested in incorporating new technology into classroom experiences.  The department will form a sub-committee to explore and report on opportunities for blended/online course offerings.	Chair/U/G Committee	Initiate in Fall 2016
<b>Dean’s Response:</b> The Faculty will continue to support the department’s use of such technologies when it will improve learning outcomes and the student experience.			
Promote study abroad opportunities	Information will be posted on the department’s website over the course of summer 2016  An Internationalization Officer has been appointed to explore exchange and study abroad opportunities and report to the department on an ongoing basis	Chair/Internationalization Officer	Ongoing

**Dean's Response:** The dean advised that the university has just announced a new model for global engagement, including strategies to both increase the global content of the curriculum at McMaster and to increase opportunities for student exchange. The department has appointed an Internationalization Officer to lead the department's efforts in exploring such opportunities within the university's broader model.

### Graduate Programs

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
Unwind the Guelph-McMaster Public Policy and Administration Program and plan on the future of a similar degree within the department and/or university	A departmental sub-committee was established at the end of May 2016 to lead the task and it will be meeting over the course of summer 2016 to clarify the department's options. Recommendations of the sub-committee will be forwarded to the graduate committee for further consideration and subsequent referral to the department as a whole. It is expected that the department will make a decision on the direction of the CMA-PPA program by the end of 2016 or early 2017.	Chair/Sub-Committee/Graduate Committee	Early 2017
<b>Dean's Response:</b> The current collaborative arrangement with the University of Guelph for this program is not sustainable into the future. The Faculty, working with the department and other units with policy focus at McMaster, will consider which option can best advance the offerings in the area of public policy.			
Engage with other relevant units on the future of public policy at McMaster to inform about and leverage departmental strengths and experience in these areas	The department will explore possibilities of developing a program with the proposed public policy institute, either as part of a revised and interdisciplinary CMA-PPA or as a complement to a stand-alone program.	Chair/Sub-Committee	Consultations will take place over the summer and fall of 2016
<b>Dean's Response:</b> A working group was established in the Faculty of Social Sciences to examine the options of building the McMaster's research and education profile for public policy. The group is expected to make recommendations shortly. Any initiatives that follow from the			

recommendations of this working group will involve a number of departments and programs, and Political Science will be central to any of these efforts, working with other units.			
Make the Major Research Paper a requirement across all MA programs and eliminate comprehensive exams	This recommendation was discussed at a department retreat in early May 2016. There was no agreement among faculty members, so the issue will be reviewed in future on an ongoing basis by the Graduate Committee	Graduate Committee	Ongoing
If comprehensive exams are retained, provide a grade that appears on students' transcripts	The Chair will consult with the Registrar's Office in 2016 to determine the feasibility of transcript inclusions of comprehensive grades. Once it has been ascertained that such transcript notations are possible, the Graduate Committee will provide recommendations concerning the nature of grades and methods for their inclusion in transcripts by assigning a course code to the department for its consideration by the end of 2016	Chair/Graduate Committee	By the end of 2016
Make quantitative methods a requirement for PhD students in both streams	Consultation between the Graduate Committee and the International Relations area group as well as the department as a whole to explore will commence to explore the recommendation that the quantitative methods course be made a requirement for International Relations PhD students	Chair/Graduate Committee	Commence 2016 and a recommendation expected to be made to the department for its decision by April 2017.
Provide small amount of funds to graduate students to assist instructors in adapting courses to new technologies and pedagogical methods	The Chair and the Graduate Committee will consult with faculty in the department and with the MacPherson Institute to determine the need and interest of current instructors at both the graduate and U/G levels and identify any potential sources of funds.	Chair/Graduate Committee	Consultations throughout 2016 with any funding arrangements to be accessed or put in place for start of 2017-18 academic year
Explore fundraising for fieldwork fellowships or	The department will make information more readily and easily available to students on School of Graduate Studies field research	Chair/Graduate Committee	2016-17



endowments or other means to create more regular access to field work funds	funding. It will encourage faculty to provide support to their students from existing research grants. The Graduate Committee will also explore further external funding opportunities offered through organizations such as MITACS		
<b>Dean's Response:</b> The dean suggested that the department may find it valuable to discuss this issue with departments that regularly send students into the field to understand better the financial arrangements associated with such field work.			
Provide additional TA training	The department will continue its training session for new TAs at the beginning of every academic year. The Graduate Committee, in consultation with the School of Graduate Studies, will consider adding another workshop	Chair/Graduate Committee	Consultations will take place in fall of 2016
Enhance professional development opportunities at the graduate level	The department will consider incorporating additional professional development opportunities through a more formalized seminar/presentation series.	Graduate Committee in collaboration with the Research Progress Committee	Begin fall 2016 and continue on an ongoing basis
Explore opportunities for experiential education such as research with community-based partners	The department will discuss the possibility of including the community engagement course as one of its permitted electives for graduate students in the MA and PhD programs and consider establishing a position of Outreach Officer	Chair	Fall 2016
<b>Dean's Response:</b> The dean acknowledged that the School of Graduate Studies has created a number of new opportunities for graduate students to better develop their professional skills and abilities. The dean noted that is also important for the department to complement these general sessions with discipline specific opportunities available to political science graduate students.			

### Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with a progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.