

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Political Science B.A., M.A., Ph.D.

Date of Review: March 21 and 22, 2023

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 and graduate programs delivered by Political Science. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, 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 Review

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the department of Political Science submitted a self-study in February 2023 to the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its graduate and 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 the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, and selected by the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a review on March 21st and 22nd, 2023. The review included interviews with the Deputy Provost; Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Assistant and Associate Deans for Social Science, Chair of the department and meetings with groups of current 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 (June and July 2023 respectively). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

- **Strengths**

- Very capable faculty complement with a solid international research reputation.
- A committed and efficient administrative support team.
- Successful innovation in the undergraduate program over the past several years, with the addition of two new minors (nb. Specialization degrees).
- Addition of new faculty to the Department.
- Rigorous academic standards.

- **Areas for Improvement**

- Graduate student program enrollment and student satisfaction.
- Sense of community within Department and across programs.
- Administration of Teaching Assistantships.
- Administrative burden on staff and faculty.

Implementation Plan

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and Dean's Responses

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
1. Restructure the graduate programs to improve enrollment and student satisfaction			
(a) Consider adding a course-only stream to the MA program, to make it more attractive to students who do not desire a core research experience as part of their graduate education.	Graduate Committee will examine the options and make a recommendation to the Department in the 2023/24 academic year.	Graduate Chair Peter Nyers Graduate Committee	Fall 2023/Winter 2024
(b) Revisit the organization of the MA Colloquium so that it actually meets the objectives set for it by the Department and experienced by students (this should involve consultation with current graduate students); consider advancing the assignment of	Course will be offered by a new faculty in 2023/24 academic year and will consider revisions to course content and structure in keeping with feedback received from	Course Director Katie Boothe Graduate Committee	Summer/Fall 2023

<p>MRP supervisors to students so that they can begin to make progress on their research as early in their program as possible.</p>	<p>current instructor and through course evaluations.</p> <p>Revisions and overall student experience will be reconsidered following completion of course, including consultations with the 2023/24 cohort as they complete the course as well as consideration of past student evaluations.</p>	<p>Course Director Katie Boothe</p> <p>Graduate Committee</p>	<p>Spring 2024</p>
<p>(c) Consider making professional development a stronger component of the program, active throughout its duration; consult with current PhD students to establish how best to provide an orientation to what they consider to be the key facets of their program.</p>	<p>Will consult with PhD students as to types of professional development they are looking for and best options to provide.</p> <p>Will examine the feasibility of providing financial support to enable instructors to bring in guest lectures, workshops and/or co-instructors to provide professional development, including working with Associate Dean of Graduate Studies</p> <p>Will examine possibility of bringing in speakers to assist faculty members to incorporate non-</p>	<p>Department Chair Greg Flynn</p> <p>Graduate Chair Peter Nyers</p> <p>Graduate Committee</p> <p>Department Chair Greg Flynn</p> <p>Graduate Chair Peter Nyers</p> <p>Graduate Chair Peter Nyers</p> <p>Speakers Series Coordinator Inder Marwah</p>	<p>Summer/Fall 2023 and ongoing</p> <p>Fall 2023</p> <p>Fall 2023/Winter 2024</p>

	academic professional development into courses.		
(d) Consider increasing the number of TA-ships offered to graduate students to enhance and make more competitive McMaster’s financial offers (this should result in a reduced need for undergraduate TAs to be used)	Will examine the allocation of TA positions and possibility of (and conditions associated with) increasing number of TA-ships to graduate students.	Department Chair Greg Flynn Graduate Chair Peter Nyers TA Coordinator Todd Alway	Late Fall 2023/Early Winter 2024
(e) Consider reversing or at least reducing the clawback of scholarships which the Department levies on successful PhD scholarship applicants, as this creates unneeded animosity among students towards the program. Recommendation is outside the scope of the IQAP review.	Will consider following the report of the Grad Student Funding Task Force and Funding discussions of the FSS. Will provide an explanation to graduate students on how Department allocates and funds students, including an explanation on why it claws back funding.	Department Chair Greg Flynn Graduate Chair Peter Nyers Department Chair Greg Flynn Graduate Chair Peter Nyers	Summer/Fall 2023 Fall 2023
2. Rebuild community across programs and the department			
(a) Consult with new faculty, CLAs, and sessional instructors to determine what degree of orientation/onboarding to the Department meets their needs and expectations, and work to bring that into effect	Will consult with recent additions and new faculty members.	Department Chair Greg Flynn	Summer/Fall 2023

<p>(b) Consider working with the university to unlock space expressly purposed for graduate students, to enable them to develop a stronger sense of community; use this enhanced space to continue providing shared office space to PhD students beyond their 4th year.</p>	<p>Will consult with FSS, although this is an ongoing issue they are already working on.</p>	<p>Department Chair Greg Flynn</p>	<p>Summer/Fall 2023</p>
	<p>Working on making use of existing formal meeting space within Department more amenable to greater and more informal use.</p>	<p>Department Chair Greg Flynn</p>	<p>Summer 2023</p>
<p>(c) Provide opportunities for graduate students to meet formally and informally, with special emphasis on interactions between junior and senior PhD students. Provide more structured onboarding for graduate students about what to expect in graduate school that goes beyond the graduate student handbook</p>	<p>Will consider making more Department financial resources available to Political Science Graduate Student Association.</p>	<p>Department Chair Greg Flynn</p>	<p>Summer 2023</p>
	<p>Will consult with graduate students to determine need and interest.</p>	<p>Graduate Chair Peter Nyers</p>	<p>Summer/Fall 2023</p>
<p>3. Match TA availability to pedagogical formats</p>			
<p>(a) Consider rebalancing tutorial assignments to target this scarce resource where it is most needed, either by increasing its provision in courses at Level I and Level II, and/or reducing the number of courses that utilize TAs at Level III (in line with any collective agreement provisions). Either action will involve revising course design to maximize available TA support, for example by adopting under-used assessment methods such as</p>	<p>Will bring in pedagogical experts on methods of assessment to provide advice to faculty on course re-design.</p>	<p>Department Chair Greg Flynn</p>	<p>Fall 2023/Winter 2024 and ongoing</p>
	<p>Will examine TA allocation issues as part of course planning for 2024/25 academic year.</p>	<p>Department Chair Greg Flynn</p>	<p>Winter/Spring 2024</p>

group projects and peer assessment in Level III.			
(b) Work to reduce the numbers of undergraduate students used as TAs by expanding use of graduate students as TAs (as above).	Will examine the allocation of TA positions and possibility of (and conditions associated with) increasing number of TA-ships to graduate students.	Department Chair Greg Flynn Graduate Chair Peter Nyers TA Coordinator Todd Alway	Late Fall 2023/Early Winter 2024
4. Relieve the administrative burden on staff and faculty			
(a) Relieve the burden on administrative staff through efficiency gains, or by adding more complement to the existing staff	Will consult with administrative staff to determine needs. Will explore potential of additional administrative support with FSS.	Department Chair Greg Flynn Department Chair Greg Flynn	Summer/Fall 2023 Summer 2023
(b) Work to establish precisely the types of support which faculty require to further incorporate experiential learning into their courses, so that the university can act on these requests	Will consult with faculty members. Will bring in pedagogical experts on experiential learning to provide advice to faculty on course re-design.	Department Chair Greg Flynn Undergraduate Chair Todd Alway Department Chair Greg Flynn	Fall 2023 Winter 2024 and ongoing

Dean's Response, Faculty of Social Sciences

An IQAP review team consisting of external members Dr. Randall Germain, Carleton University and Dr. Veronica Kitchen, University of Waterloo, and internal member, Dr. Victor Satzewich (McMaster Sociology) conducted a review in March 2023 of both the undergraduate and graduate programs of the Department of Political Science. I thank the reviewers for their thorough and thoughtful review of Political Science's educational programs. The insights and recommendations provided by the review will be valuable to the Department and the Faculty as they work to improve the programs in the coming years. Herein I provide my response to that report.

Undergraduate Programs

The report provides a strong endorsement of the undergraduate programs, which have experienced considerable enrolment growth in recent years. While many factors have contributed to the enrolment growth, important contributors include the development of two specializations within the undergraduate program, the restructuring of key courses, and the commitment shown by the department and its faculty to the undergraduate program and its students. The external report identifies a need for the department to establish better the types of support required by instructors to integrate experiential learning into their courses and suggests minor changes pertaining to level 4 courses. The department can address these areas working with partners in the Faculty of Social Sciences' Careers and Experiential Education Office and MacPherson Institute staff. Finally, although directed at addressing issues related to the graduate program, recommendations regarding the TAs and related matters have implications for the undergraduate curriculum that the department will have to monitor.

Graduate Programs

The reports provides an overall positive assessment of the graduate programs and the quality of the training provided, but identifies some important concerns, including declining graduate student enrollments, particularly at the MA level, a need to enhance the student experience, space and community, and the allocation and use of TAs. The department's response to the report's recommendations outlines specific actions to be taken with respect to each recommendation. Most will be addressed within the coming academic year. Here I offer some further comment in these areas.

As the report notes, pressures on MA enrolments in political science are shared across Ontario universities, due in part to a growing number of policy-oriented professional programs. The primary recommendation to address this is to create a one-year, course-based MA program alongside the one-year MRP-based MA program already offered. In considering this, it will be important for the department to assess how the program learning goals will differ from the MRP-based option, the demand for such a degree relative to an explicit policy-oriented professional degree, and the impact such a course-only program would have on enrolment in the MRP-based program. The report identified challenges regarding graduate student space, and particularly its impact on the ability of graduate students to build a sense of community. As the department's response notes, this issue has been identified more generally within the Social Sciences. The Associate Dean Graduate Studies, Melanie Heath, and the Director of Finance and Administration, Juliette Prouse, this past year began a systematic review of graduate student space in Social Sciences. The review includes consultation with graduate students, program staff, faculty, and others as appropriate to understand how the Faculty can better meet the space needs of graduate students and graduate programs. The report identified a number of issues pertaining to TAs in the department, including the number of TAs, the balance of graduate and undergraduate TAs, the assignment of TAs across courses, and the need to better match undergraduate course designs to the availability of TAs. The TA budget in the

Faculty of Social Sciences is allocated among departments using a needs-based approach based on both a department's undergraduate course enrolments and its graduate student enrolment. Once a department receives its TA budget allocation, the department determines how best to use that budget to support both undergraduate education and its graduate students. Relative to the sizes of its undergraduate and graduate enrolments, the TA budget for the Department of Political Science is comparable to that of all other departments and programs in the Social Sciences. But because in recent years its undergraduate enrolment has been growing while its graduate enrolment has been declining, over this period the department has faced increasing pressure on its historical approach to allocating TAs among its courses. It is fully within the power of the department to modify its approach to allocating TAs and course designs to address the concerns identified by the review team. This work should involve consultation with educational developers and related staff from the MacPherson Institute.

The Department of Political Science has a deep commitment to its educational programs and to its students. I know that the department will respond thoughtfully to the recommendations provided by the review and the Faculty will support the department in this work.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the December 6, 2023, meeting. The committee recommends that the Political Sciences B.A., M.A., Ph.D. program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than eight years after the start of the last review.