

Political Science, Undergraduate, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies

Cyclical Program Review – 2007 to 2014

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

Reported to Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance: December 12, 2016

Program Description

The original Department of Political Science was founded in 1964, with the new merged version (combining the separate Arts and Atkinson departments) established in 2009 within the newly created faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. The department presently offers a number of different degree options:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Political Science (90 credits)
- BA with Honours in Political Science (120 credits)
- BA Specialized Honours in Political Science (120 credits)
- BA Specialized Honours in Global Political Studies (120 credits)
- BA Honours Double Major
- BA Honours Double Major (linked)
- BA Honours Major/Minor

The above degrees preceded and followed the merger. The degree options below were added after the merger in 2009.

- International Bachelor of Arts (iBA) with Honors in Political Science
- iBA Specialized Honours
- iBA Honours Major/Minor

At the graduate level students may pursue an MA or a PhD as well as graduate diplomas in International & Security Studies and in Democratic Administration.



Program	Accepts 2014	Enrolment FTES 2014	Degrees Awarded 2014
Global Political Studies (LAPS)	5	39	9
Political Science (LAPS)	187	908	143 (Hons); 97 (90-credit)
MA	40	48	39 and 4 Diplomas
PHD	21	103	15

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:

Rianne Mahon, Professor, Political Science, Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario

Mark B. Salter, Professor, Political Studies, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario

Philip Kelly, Professor, Geography, York University

Documentation Provided to the External Reviewers

Prior to the site visit, the external reviewers are provided with the following:

- Dean's /Principal's Agenda of Concerns
- Department/Program Omnibus Statement (where applicable)
- Program Self-Study Brief, which includes program structure, curriculum and learning outcomes, program reflection, enrolment and retention data, resources, student input and quality enhancement opportunities
- Faculty CVs
- University, Faculty and Program planning documents

Site Visit: March 31 and April 1, 2016

The Political Science site visit combined the review of the Political Science Department in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and that of Glendon College. The Reviewers met with Alice Pitt, Vice Provost Academic, Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, Dean, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, Principal Donald Ipperciel from Glendon College and Barbara Crow, Dean and Associate Vice-President, Faculty of Graduate Studies. In addition, the reviewers met with the following LAPS representatives: David Mutimer, Chair, Dennis Pilon, Undergraduate Program Director and Elizabeth Dauphinee, Global Political Studies Coordinator from the Department of Political Science. Glendon participants in addition to the Principal included Mario Roy, Associate Principal Academics, Ian Roberge, Chair, Department of Political Science. The Graduate Program was represented by Sabah Alnasseri, Graduate Program Director, and the MA Coordinator Terry Maley. The reviewers had several opportunities on each campus to meet with

graduate and undergraduate Faculty members and students, as well as administrative staff.

Outcome:

The Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations. Progress on the recommendations will be included in the Follow-up Report due June 2018. The next CPR will begin in the Fall of 2022.

Strengths:

The Review Report notes that the LAPS Political Science Department enjoys a strong reputation and that its “general objectives are clearly consistent with the priorities identified in the University Academic Plan 2011-2015, which emphasized the promotion of critical explanations, social justice and service to the public good; fostering the capacity to contribute to building a democratic society, and development of a deeper understanding of global issues facing the community as well as the 2013-2018 Strategic Research Plan, which identified ‘forging a just and sustainable world’ as one of its six priorities.

Undergraduate programs:

- The program has a deep bench of talented faculty members and is generally strong in all five fields of concentration. Many mid-career faculty are on the road to establishing strong international reputations.
- Courses at the 1000 and 2000 level are generally taught by full-time faculty, as are most upper year courses.

Graduate program:

- The Department has a global reputation for critical approaches to political science. There is real strength in the areas of Marxist political economy, feminist politics and critical international relations theory, as well as fresh thinking in the approach to Canadian politics and consideration of key contemporary questions in Comparative Politics.
- Mentors are appointed to all incoming PhD students.
- Students at the master’s level have the opportunity to take integrated graduate courses with the doctoral students which opens up the opportunity to encourage students going on to the PhD to take a core course in their minor field.

Opportunities for Enhancement:

Undergraduate programs:

- The program should consider moving toward three credit courses at the 2000 level, including an Introduction to Women and Politics, identified as one of the program’s five fields but currently the only one without a 2000 level core course.
- Clear pathways for students should be identified to help students navigate

through the multitude of third and fourth year courses, identifying the essential elements of the programs and reflecting existing and emerging strengths within the unit. An effective articulation of program level expectations and student learning outcomes mapped to courses and fields is required.

- The program should consider the possibility of a placement or co-op course as well as the clear opportunities and identification of experiential learning opportunities in existing courses.

Graduate program:

- Doctoral students should be able to complete core courses in the first year to facilitate identification of a thesis topic and the assembly of a dissertation committee earlier than third year.
- The reviewers strongly recommend the introduction of a research design course to facilitate student research.

Recommendations from the Reviewers (selected)

To support the best utilization of resources and capital, the reviewers had the following core recommendations for the programs:

1. **Reform the LAPS graduate program** -to address its multiple challenges, particularly at the doctoral level; the following actions were recommended:

- i. Streamline Yr 1-2:** Students take rationalized and streamlined core courses in Yr 1.
- ii. Qualifying Exams Summer Yr 1:** both qualifying exams to be written before Yr 2 starts, with a corresponding change in the cultural expectations of the workload and purpose of the doctoral exams.
- iii. Research Design Course Yr 2:** A general, critically-oriented research design course that leads to the practical creation of a viable doctoral dissertation project, with the expectation that project will be defensible in Yr 2 summer.
- iv. Professional Development programming:** Creation of a stable, professional development curriculum that includes academic writing and publishing, project planning and time management, non-academic careers, teaching and research.
- v. Culture of collegiality:** York has only recently begun to respond to the 2008 program review report comments on the number of students failing to complete the graduate program. In addition to supporting these reforms, LAPS Political Science must take ownership of its professional responsibility to prepare students for academic and non-academic job markets alike, and to create a culture of excellence and collegiality. The current department plan does not address culture, yet this must be a priority.

2. **Identity Exercise:** Given the recent and imminent change in the professoriate at York, it is imperative that there be an active, positive, and forward-looking

reassessment of the existing LAPS department and an alignment of strengths and goals. In addition to an acknowledged strength in political economy and feminism, critical thinking and social justice, York faculty also have a strong presence in post-colonialism, critical security studies, and critical methods. A program of mentoring and the development of a culture of collaboration, collegiality and conversation must be fostered in order to capitalize on the strong mid-career faculty that are already productive and well-positioned to take leadership roles in the department.

Implementation Plan (prioritized)

The reviewers mentioned numerous times in their report that the LAPS Department of Political Science is at a cross roads, and that this is an opportune time to chart its new, unique and positive identity.

The Dean's Implementation Plan focuses on the need for the Department to establish plans for curricular review and renewal.

Two priorities for the undergraduate program are below:

Action	First Responsibility	Final Responsibility	Timeline
Curricular Review Report of Undergraduate Program with clear timelines and outcomes (including issues raised in the self-study and DAC)	Department (done in October 2016)	Dean's Office in consultation with the Department	January 2017 at the latest
Retreat reviewing the identity of Political Science – looking forward strategically	Department	Dean's Office review of retreat goals and aims	January 2017

At the graduate level, the following priorities have been identified.

Action	First Responsibility	Final Responsibility	Timeline
Curricular Review Report of Graduate Program with an eye on collaboration	Department	Dean's Office in consultation with the Department and other impacted Graduate Programs	March 1 st , 2017
Developing a plan to deal with time to completion	Department	Dean's Office review	Report from Department and School by March 1 st 2017

The Follow-up Report from the Dean, due in June 2018, should itemize the action items that results from these planning activities and should include details about where the responsibility lies and the timelines for completion.

Alice J. Pitt
Vice-Provost Academic
York University