

**YORK UNIVERSITY**

Final Assessment Report Executive Summary

**SOCIAL AND POLITICAL  
THOUGHT**

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies  
Faculty of Graduate Studies

**Social and Political Thought, Graduate Program  
(MA and PhD), Department of Social Science**

**Cyclical Program Review – 2008 to 2015**

This Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the programs listed below.

**Program(s) Reviewed:**

MA, Social and Political Thought  
PhD Program, Social and Political Thought

**Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:**

Dr. Thomas Carmichael, Dean, Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario  
Dr. David Theo Goldberg, Professor, Director, Humanities Research Institute, University of California, Irvine  
Dr. Lisa Farley, Associate Professor, Education, York University

**Cyclical Program Review Key Milestones:**

Cyclical Program Review Launch: September 2016  
Self-study (undergraduate and graduate) submitted to Vice-Provost Academic: August 2017  
Date of the Site Visit: October 12,13, 2017  
Review Report received: December 2016  
Program Response received: March 2017; revised November 2018  
Initial Dean's Response Received: April 2017; revised November 2018

At the May 2017 meeting of the Joint Sub Committee on Quality Assurance it was determined that a meeting with the program in Social and Political Thought should be held to discuss the issues raised. This meeting, having been delayed by the York University labour disruption of 2018, was held in November 2018. Revised statements from the program and the Dean were provided and the Implementation Plan and FAR confirmed by the Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance March 2019.

Submitted by Alice Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic, York University



This review was conducted under the York University Quality Assurance Protocol, August 2013.

**SITE VISIT:** October 12 & 13, 2016

At the start of their visit, the reviewers met with Alice Pitt, Vice Provost Academic, and Barbara Crow, Dean of Graduate Studies and then met with Amanda Glasbeek, Chair of Social Science. A meeting was held with JJ McMurtry Associate Dean, Programs/LAPS and Sandra Whitworth, Associate Dean LAPS/Grad, followed by meetings with the Graduate Program Director, Eve Haque and the Social and Political Thought Program Executive and faculty members, as well as the administrative assistant for the program. The University Librarian met with the reviewers and students attended a lunch with the reviewers.

**OUTCOME:**

The Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance received the Program and Decanal responses to the recommendations and met with representatives of the program and the Associate Dean of Programs and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research for Liberal Arts and Professional Studies to discuss the review outcomes further. There is a strong consensus that SPT represents York's strength in interdisciplinary graduate education in the social sciences. Growth in the number and size of programs at York and beyond and the introduction of a new university budget model have had an inordinate effect on programs like SPT. The implementation plan calls upon the program, the Office of the Dean of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, the Dean and Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and the Office of the Vice Provost, Academic to develop a model to sustain and invigorate SPT. *During the 2018-2019 academic year, concrete discussions are underway to address issues relating to interdisciplinarity and program collaboration within the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies and across the university. Curriculum planning will provide the justification for professorial releases. As a result, enrolments in the courses will be maximized and cross-program student cohorts will be fostered.*

A report on the progress of the initiatives undertaken in response to accepted recommendations will be provided in the Follow-up Report which will be due in 18 months (September 2020).

The next Cyclical Program Review will begin in the Fall of 2023 with a site visit expected in the Fall of 2024 or Winter of 2025.

**STRENGTHS AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

With an MA and PhD launched in 1973, Social and Political Thought emphasizes the study of social and political ideas as these are manifested in creative theories, political movements and associated phenomena that propel social change. As a hallmark program for interdisciplinary thought and research, SPT draws colleagues from across the university in an ongoing effort to broaden our horizons and challenge our own traditions. Three traditional areas of focus (History of Social and Political Thought; Consciousness and Society; and Economy and Society) have contributed to several generations of academic leaders in Canada and beyond. As the Review Report notes: "As one of LA&PS's oldest graduate programs and one of the most highly regarded graduate programs in the division, SPT has successfully attracted national and

international applications from highly qualified candidates with demonstrated capacity to work independently. SPT is principally a doctoral program, with a smaller one-year M.A. program offered under its umbrella, and these programs lead to Ph.D. and M.A. degrees respectively.”

The program reaches students who have identified a program of research that cannot easily be accommodated within the framework of one of the associated disciplines. The program prides itself on its ability to ensure intellectual rigour while also identifying and nurturing exciting new ideas at the edges of thought and disciplines within the academy and the broader community. The program is recognized as one of the premier programs in social and political thought, even as similar programs proliferate nationally and internationally. The Review Report states: “The students we met were thoughtful, intellectually mature, and pursuing interesting projects.” The Review Report identified several university priorities that are congruent with and enabled by SPT; however, the contribution most emphatically endorsed is “the University’s insistence that academic quality is an overriding imperative, within a culture informed by interdisciplinarity and by a commitment to engagement in the public sphere.”

### **Implementation Plan**

The chart below outlines the implementation plan approved by the Joint Subcommittee on Quality Assurance in March 2019.

Recommendation	Action	Responsible for Follow-up	Timeline
1 That the program have a secure, dedicated budget.	The Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), in collaboration with the Office of the Provost, has undertaken consultations to address these issues, which also affect other programs and will make recommendations in the Spring of 2019.	Dean of FGS; Office of Provost; programs	Spring 2019; Report on outcomes in the Follow-up Report, due September 2020.
2 That SPT and its host Department of Social Science establish a mechanism for more coherent integration of the graduate program into the Department	The program will report on the outcomes of efforts to integrate the program into the Department's governance in its follow-up report.	SPT program and Department of Social Science.	Follow-up Report, due September 2020.
3 That there be clear expectations for faculty members affiliated with the program.	The program will submit revised appointment procedures to FGS by April 2019. Once approved, the program will review current affiliations and present a new list with the follow-up report.	SPT program with FGS.	Follow-up Report, due September 2020.
4 That an adequate staffing model be established to support the SPT program.	The recommendation to increase course release is out of scope for a CPR. However, the JCSQA ask that the recommendations brought to the community by the Dean of FGS include consideration of appropriate terms for	FGS	Follow-up Report, due September 2020

	interdisciplinary graduate programs such as SPT. Staffing supports will be included in the follow-up report.		
5 That dedicated space for the SPT program be found.	The FGS Dean's report on inter-Faculty/inter-disciplinary graduate programs will include recommendations regarding space and location to be developed in consultation with programs and Faculty Deans	FGS in consultation with programs and Faculty Deans.	Follow-up Report, due September 2020
6 That supports for the SPT student community be established.	The program will report on times to completion, student satisfaction with the PhD Core Course (based on a student survey), and any other measures taken to build a strong student community within SPT and with students in related programs.	Program	Follow-up Report, due September 2020