



Four Year Report (2022)

Political Science

Graduate and Undergraduate Programs

(reviewed 2017/18)

A. Summary of Review

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

1. The academic programs offered by the Department of Political Science which were examined as part of the review were:

- MA in Political Science
- BA (Honours) in Political Science
- BA (Honours) Co-op in Political Science
- BA (Honours) Co-op in Public Administration
- BA (Honours) in International Political Economy
- BA with Major in Political Science
- BA (Pass) in Political Science
- BA (Honours) Combined
- BA with Major Combined
- BA (Pass) Combined
- Minors
- Certificate in Public Law
- Certificate in Public Administration

2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Joanna Everitt (University of New Brunswick) and Marlene Sokolon (Concordia University) and an internal reviewer, Gregory Betts (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 13-15, 2018.
4. The Final Assessment Report was approved by Senate on December 12, 2018.

5. The reviewers assigned the programs the following outcome categories:

Program (s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
MA in Political Science	X			
BA (Honours) in Political Science	X			
BA (Honours) Co-op in Political Science		X		
BA (Honours) Co-op in Public Administration		X		
BA (Honours) in International Political Economy	X			
BA with Major in Political Science	X			
BA (Pass) in Political Science	X			
BA (Honours) Combined	X			
BA with Major Combined	X			
BA (Pass) Combined	X			
Minors	X			
Certificate in Public Law	X			
Certificate in Public Administration	X			

6. The next review of the undergraduate programs in the Department of Political Science will be in 2025/26.

B. Recommendations

Recommendation #1

Strategize hiring priorities.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. It is expected that the Department will work through normal channels of advocacy for any new faculty resources identified as a result of the strategic planning.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19.

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
<p>Action #1 The department has hired two tenure-track faculty members in the last four years, both of which were aligned with university strategic priorities.</p>	Year 1	Year 3
<p>Action #2 Craft Indigenous politics job ad to attract scholar with teaching and research interests in several key areas of the discipline.</p>	Year 1	Year 3

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

One of these positions was in indigenous politics, which aligns with the university strategic goal of indigenous reconciliation, and the other position was in Latin American politics, which aligns with the university’s increased focus and partnerships in this region.

Recommendation #2

Develop and promote a consistent Departmental “brand” that reflects current program strengths.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee understands that reflection on the Departmental identity in terms of strengths, sub-specialties, thematic areas and marketing would address this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving: Department
 Responsible for resources: Department
 Responsible for implementation: Department
 Timeline: Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19.

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
<p>Action #1 The department has held several discussions on branding, but the exercise is on hold pending the conclusion of a university-level effort to renew the Brock University brand, commenced in 2021.</p>	Year 1	Ongoing/ delayed

<p>Action #2 The department will continue to review undergraduate and graduate programs with goal of crafting a distinct departmental identity.</p>	<p>Year 1</p>	<p>Year 4</p>
--	---------------	---------------

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The department has held several discussions on branding but is wary of department branding efforts being preempted or working at cross-purposes with university-level branding. Consequently, the branding exercise is on hold pending the conclusion of a university-level effort to renew the Brock University brand, commenced in 2021. The identity/brand of our undergraduate and graduate programs was a central topic of consideration and discussion during our efforts to renew the undergraduate program in 2021 and the graduate program in 2022.

Recommendation #3

<p>Adopt a more holistic approach to curriculum planning.</p>	
<p>ARC Disposition of the Recommendation ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.</p>	
<p>Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)</p>	
<p>Responsible for approving:</p>	<p>Department</p>
<p>Responsible for resources:</p>	<p>Department</p>
<p>Responsible for implementation:</p>	<p>Department</p>
<p>Timeline:</p>	<p>Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20.</p>

<p>Actions Taken</p>	<p>Year Action Started</p>	<p>Year Action Completed</p>
<p>Action #1 The department is discussing the undergraduate program and the need to better integrate various subfields and create scaffolded course selection patterns.</p>	<p>Year 1</p>	<p>Year 3</p>

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The department has completed an internal review and renewal of the undergraduate program. From 2018 to 2020, several discussions about the undergraduate program were held at the department level. In early 2021, an internal review process was initiated in which each of the five subfields and the research methods group reviewed the undergraduate curriculum to cut unsustainable courses, create new courses, and renew existing courses through course title and course description changes. These proposed changes were then discussed at the department level and a mass of course and curriculum changes were made during Fall 2021 UPC. Among the

most important changes to the undergraduate program were the inclusion of mandatory Canadian politics and quantitative research methods course requirements.

Recommendation #4

Review the first-year course offerings to ensure that the twin mandate of recruitment into the program and the introduction of core concepts and ideas are met.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The department is encouraged to undertake an ongoing process of curriculum review and revision, utilizing the curriculum map that was prepared for the cyclical review.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving: Department
 Responsible for resources: Department
 Responsible for implementation: Department
 Timeline: Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20.

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 Meeting of first year course instructors held in fall term to discuss coordination of course content, requirements, and new course development.	Year 1	Year 3
Action #2 Department retreats will discuss first year offerings in context of broader discussion of undergraduate program.	Year 1	Year 3

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Cooperation and standardization of course design elements among first year courses. Instructors of first year courses met on several occasions and developed a common late penalty policy, agreed on a single assignment citation format, and selected a single writing guide to be used in all first-year classes. During our undergraduate program renewal efforts in 2021, the department also had several discussions on the merits of introducing a common required first year course tentatively known as POLI 1P90. These discussions continue as no consensus has been reached.

Recommendation #5

Continue to expand experiential learning options in current and new courses.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee understands that experiential learning opportunities are already embedded in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. Increased awareness of the wide range of experiential learning options would benefit both faculty and students.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving: Department
 Responsible for resources: Department
 Responsible for implementation: Department
 Timeline: Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19.

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 Amend course calendar descriptions to highlight courses with experiential elements.	Year 1	Year 3
Action #2 Investigate creation of a 2 nd year fall course that Model UN students could take to prepare them formally for Model UN meetings in March (annually).	Year 1	Year 3

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Experiential learning components have been incorporated into several courses at instructors' discretion. For example, POLI 4P12 (Citizen Politics) and POLI 4P17 (Canadian Politics in the Digital Age) now regularly involve service-learning components with community partners in Niagara and beyond. These course descriptions have been revised to reflect this. The department's internship course is also heavily subscribed and is popular amongst our fourth-year students.

Recommendation #6

Increase flexibility and experiential learning opportunities in graduate program[s] for graduates who do not intend to pursue academic careers.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration by the Department. The Committee understands that experiential learning opportunities benefit students in the graduate program who move on to both academic and non-academic careers.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving: Department
 Responsible for resources: Department
 Responsible for implementation: Department
 Timeline: Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19.

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 The department will hold retreat to fully consider this recommendation.	Year 1	Year 4

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The department is engaged in an internal review and renewal of the graduate program. After completing its internal review of the undergraduate program in 2021, the department has now turned its attention to an internal review of the graduate program in 2022. The current GPD has sought and received funding to hire an RA who has comprehensively researched the structure of other graduate programs in political science in Canada, including their approaches to experiential learning. This report has been reviewed by the Graduate Committee and disseminated to the department faculty. Department discussions on renewing the graduate program, including the addition of more experiential learning components, is being undertaken in early 2022 with anticipated GPC changes in Fall 2022.

Recommendation #7

Increase flexibility in the graduate program by expanding on cross-listed, transdisciplinary courses.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation as part of the curriculum review.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving: Department
 Responsible for resources: Department
 Responsible for implementation: Department
 Timeline: Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19.

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 Links maintained with other programs, especially the Humanities cross-disciplinary doctoral program.	Year 1	Year 4 and Ongoing
Action #2 Hold retreat to discuss graduate program flexibility and cross-listing of courses.	Year 1	Year 4

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The department is engaged in an internal review and renewal of the graduate program. Potential cross-listings of courses in other programs are being discussed as part of the internal review and renewal of the graduate program.

Recommendation #8

Increased TA Training and improved TA feedback.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the jurisdiction of the Committee and has implications with respect to the Brock University/CUPE Collective Agreement. The Committee expects that improved TA training and feedback would be of benefit to the programs and encourages the use of existing University resources and programs in place to help facilitate this.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #9

Nominate outstanding staff.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to reflect existing practice.

Implementation Plan

No action required.

C. Unit Summative Analysis and Evaluation**1. To what extent has the Unit achieved the improvements suggested by the reviewers?**

Apart from the branding exercise and the review and reform of the graduate program curriculum, all of the improvements suggested by the reviewers have been achieved. The branding exercise is on hold due to developments at the university level beyond the department's control. The reform of the graduate program curriculum is ongoing and will be completed later this year.

2. What overall impact has it had on the Unit's programs?

Our faculty and our programs look considerably different than they did five years ago. Faculty retirements and new hires have recast our faculty so that our research profile is more in alignment with university strategic goals. Our undergraduate programs have been updated and refocused, our five sub-fields are now less siloed, and several program inefficiencies and redundancies have been eliminated.

3. Is the Unit adopting a process of continuous quality improvement for its programs?

Yes. The department has begun its annual review of its programs and curriculum in the Spring rather than in the Fall. This allows for more time, discussion, and opportunity to identify program weaknesses and to find solutions than the previous approach which was condensed into the hectic few weeks of the UPC process. The new approach allows for greater reflection and a more strategic thinking.

4. How well do the programs now align with Brock University strategic priorities?

The department's programs now align with university strategic priorities more closely than they have at any time in the past. All of our faculty hiring decisions and all of our program reforms have been guided by these strategic priorities.

5. How does this review and its results position the programs as the Unit moves into the next review cycle?

Due to a spate of retirements, the hiring of new faculty with new research interests, and ongoing budgetary constraints, the department needed to review its strategic direction and its programming in order to adapt to a new reality. This review has facilitated this adaptation and,

as the department moves into the next review cycle, we are well-positioned to exploit new programming opportunities.

D. ARC Final Summary

In final summary of the 2017/18 cyclical academic review of the programs offered by the Department of Political Science, ARC will determine the following:

1. Have the Reviewers' Recommendations have been addressed satisfactorily?
YES
2. Has the Unit established a direction for next steps as it prepares for the next review cycle?
YES
3. Has the Unit achieved a broad-based, reflective and forward-looking self-assessment?
YES