



Cyclical Program Review Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan for Political Studies Programs

Programs Reviewed:

BA, BA (Hons) Political Studies (Major, Joint Honours, Minor, General)
MA, PhD Political Studies

Overview

In accordance with Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes (QUQAP), this final assessment report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the external evaluation, internal responses, and assessment of the above programs. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, and opportunities for program improvement.

An implementation plan (IP) is attached that identifies:

- how the recommendations will be implemented
- the expected timeframe for completion
- who will be responsible for acting on and monitoring progress on the recommendations, and
- any resource or governance implications resulting from the recommendations.

Final Assessment Report: Executive Summary

Summary of Review

- 1) The Department of Political Studies produced a self-study document that was reviewed by the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science, the Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (SGSPA), and the Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning). The self-study was approved on January 24, 2025.
- 2) The review team visit took place on March 27-28, 2025. The review team members were:
 - i. Dr. Eric Helleiner, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Waterloo
 - ii. Dr. Grace Skogstad, Professor Emerita, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto
 - iii. Dr. Jeff Brison, Professor, History and Cultural Studies, Queen's University

- 3) The visit included meetings with:
 - i. Students (undergraduate and graduate)
 - ii. Faculty including adjunct faculty
 - iii. Staff
 - iv. Postdoctoral Fellows
 - v. Librarian
 - vi. Department Head, Graduate Chair, Undergraduate Chair, Coordinator, Politics, Philosophy and Economics program
 - vii. Representatives of the four [Department Institutes](#)
 - viii. Heads of Cognate departments
 - ix. Dean and Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science
 - x. Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA
 - xi. Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning
- 4) The review team reported on April 28, 2025. The Department Head, Faculty Dean and the Vice-Provost and Dean (SGSPA) provided responses to the review team report by March 3, 2026.
- 5) The Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee considered the review team report, internal responses and a draft Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan at its meeting on March 31, 2026. The Report and Plan were approved at that meeting subject to the inclusion of two minor revisions that were agreed during the discussion.

The following strengths were noted:

- The faculty are a distinguished group of researchers and teachers, strongly committed to delivering a high-quality undergraduate experience.
- Faculty have important research impact. The programs are making impressive efforts to integrate research and teaching.
- Students are very satisfied with the quality of their instruction and overall experience in the Political Studies undergraduate programs.
- The graduate program is praised by students, who score faculty high on their expertise, availability, formal and informal mentorship, and financial support.
- Both undergraduate and graduate students evaluate their programs, and the knowledge and skills they have gained, positively.
- The department has a collegial culture.
- The programs make important contributions to Queen's commitment to student learning and to global engagement. The department is the only North American partner for Europe's largest student mobility program (the Erasmus + Euroculture program).
- The innovative internship program embeds Queen's in the community, offering dozens of placements with over twenty community partners.
- Important steps have been taken to diversify the faculty and course offerings with hirings of six new faculty members with expertise in race, LGBTQ issues, and Indigenous politics. The International Relations Resource Bank is a resource on

which faculty can draw to revise their course materials to address issues of decolonization.

- Affiliation of faculty with four research centres. The centres enhance students' research capacities and professional training and facilitate networking.
- Many resources are available to sustain the scholarship and research activities of students, including undergraduate research fellowships.
- Times to completion for MA students are good, and well above the average of the U15 group of Canadian research-intensive universities.
- PhD student's scholarly output is very good.
- Addition of Gender and Politics as a field of study is a creative feature of the graduate program.

The following opportunities for enhancement were noted:

- The increased number of faculty with expertise in gender and politics, race and politics, and Indigenous politics offer an opportunity for Queen's Political Studies and its Centre for the Study of Democracy and Diversity to become a Canadian leader for teaching and research on these important issues.
- The ongoing discussions about redesigning the Master of Public Administration (currently offered by the School of Policy Studies) provide an opportunity for strengthening faculty resources in strategic ways and making new courses available for Political Studies students. With additional faculty members, there may be an opportunity to create a policy stream in the MA program or a professional revenue-generating public policy certificate at the MA level.
- There may be opportunities to boost course offerings by exploring synergies with other departments, including the creation of a joint graduate methods course in order to enhance in-house methods training.
- The introduction of the new modular degree plans may boost demand for Political Studies courses, given that students in other majors have more electives and given the department's high teaching reputation. It may also provide an opportunity to reduce the number of required 400-level courses for Political Studies majors in ways that creates greater flexibility for the department in the allocation of its teaching resources.

Summary of Review Team Recommendations

The reviewers made ten recommendations in the following areas. For a full list of the recommendations, please see the Implementation Plan.

It is recommended that the department:

- Develop strategies to deal with consequences of pending faculty retirements for delivery of the programs.
- Extend its efforts to integrate pre-tenure faculty fully into the department.

- With the Faculty of Arts and Science, create a formal mechanism for monitoring the impact of new administrative hub arrangements on staff, faculty and graduate students, and for discussing solutions where necessary.
- Strengthen coordination of research activities and research administration across research centres, and between centres and the department.
- Explore student demand for at least one online upper-year course per annum on a three-year trial basis; assess student enrolment and satisfaction.
- Vary the annual complement of graduate course offerings.
- Strike formal three-person dissertation committees once PhD students have finished all their formal course work, as they begin working on their dissertation proposal.
- Take steps to make the requirements for PhD comprehensive exams more consistent across the fields in terms of issues such as length of reading lists and referencing expectations.
- Explore strategies to enhance the cohort experience for MA students.
- Explore, in conjunction with other disciplines, the opportunity for a new interdisciplinary MA specialization in Gender and Security, and/or a new interdisciplinary MA in Democracy and Diversity.

Status

The academic programs in the Department of Political Studies have been approved to continue.

Dates monitoring reports due: Oct 2027 & Apr 2030

Date of next review: 2030-2031 academic year

Prepared by Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning), Academic Unit, Faculty Dean and Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: May 2025 - March 2026

Approved by the Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee: March 31, 2026



Implementation Plan

Notes:

- 1) Short-term = within 1 year, Medium-term = 1-3 years, Long-term = beyond 3 years.
- 2) Where Deans have not added comments, this denotes that they agree with the action plan and have no further comments.

Recommendation 1 (Continuous Improvement): We recommend the Department create a process to develop strategies for dealing with the consequences of pending retirements for the delivery of POLS programs. Among the issues it could address are the opportunities created by a redesigned MPA program, potential teaching synergies with other departments, the number of required courses at the 400 level, and rules about graduate course selection from other departments. (Short-term to medium-term goal; action for Department plus external parties).

Planned Actions	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Participate in search for Dunning Chair	Faculty Dean: Supporting Search	Department Head / representative	Reduces impact of retirements	Dunning Chair becomes available for teaching / supervision in POLS at end of 3 year term.

Action B: Monitor evolution of undergraduate course demand as a result of transition to modular major	Faculty Dean: Can support if needed/helpful	Undergraduate Committee, Chair	Modular major should reduce need for resource-intensive 4 th year courses.	Shift from Specialization / Old Major to New Major was already apparent in Spring 25 plan selection. Monitor trend over Spring 26 and 27.
Action C: Meet with other departments to identify / create shared courses		Head, Undergraduate and Graduate Chairs	Permits teaching of larger shared courses with fewer instructors	Planning to occur 25-26, implementation as retirements make themselves felt, and necessity of sharing becomes evident.
Action D: Increase participation in undergraduate Thesis option		Undergraduate Committee, Chair	Reduces need for resource-intensive 4 th year courses.	Planning 25-26, for increase in 26-27 course selection.
Action E: Use postdoctoral fellows to fill teaching needs		Head and Adjunct Appointments Committee	Increases supply of courses	Use three postdoctoral fellows, funded through endowed funds, to fill teaching gaps created by retirements. Each postdoc contract includes teaching two courses

Recommendation 2 (Continuous Improvement): We recommend the Department extend its efforts to integrate pre-tenure faculty fully into the Department, including by designating formal research and teaching mentors, and ensuring they have opportunities to teach courses in their areas of specialization. (Short-term to medium-term goal; action for Department).

N.B.: the department noted that this recommendation is partially based on a factual error. It is, and will continue to be the department's practice that all pre-tenure faculty members teach in their area of expertise.

Planned Actions	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate.	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Encourage pre-tenure faculty to present work in progress in departmental speakers (Corry Colloquium)	No comments on actions A-D.	Faculty member responsible for the speaker series, plus Head and Executive to encourage attendance by senior faculty	none	Planning during 25-26 for first presentations during 26-27.
Action B: Hold research luncheon once per term focused on concerns of pre-tenure faculty		Prof. Farrelly	Modest cost associated with luncheons from a T&E fund	Starting Fall 25
Action C: Target pre-tenure faculty in some of the sessions of the Teaching Working Group		One faculty member and one graduate student	1 GRF based on endowed funds	Plan Fall 25, starting Winter 26
Action D: Review existing mentoring system		Head and executive committee	none	Fall 25

Recommendation 3 (Continuous Improvement): We recommend the Department create a formal mechanism for monitoring the impact of the new administrative hub arrangements on staff, faculty and graduate students and for discussing solutions where necessary. (Short-term goal; action for Department plus external Faculty of Arts and Science).

Planned Action	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Create Hub Advisory Committee (HAC)	No comments	Department to select two faculty members, one graduate student, and one staff member		Committee to be formed Fall 25, report in Fall 26

Recommendation 4: We recommend efforts be undertaken to strengthen coordination of research activities and research administration across research centres and between the POLS department and the centres. (Short-term to medium-term goal; action for Department plus external Faculty of Arts and Science and non-POLS directors of research centres).

Planned Action	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Reapply for Tier 1 Status for new Centre for Innovation in Policy Research at Queen's (CIPRQ)	Faculty Dean: Support from the AD (research) as needed Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: N/A	Waren Mabee, plus Directors of CSDD (Haklai), CIDP (Murphy), IIGR (Hanniman), and JDI (Cotton)	FAS Advancement + Mabee to seek gifts in support of new Centre	Application in 2026

Recommendation 5: We recommend the Department explore student demand for at least one online upper-year course per annum on a three-year trial basis and then assess student enrolment and satisfaction. (Short-term to medium-term goal; action for POLS Department and Faculty of Arts and Science with the latter providing technical support plus financial incentives).

Planned Actions	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Continue to offer 4 th year online course during summer		Adjunct instructor	Use Hardy endowed fund	Started Summer 25, continuing summer 26 and 27
Action B: Study possibility of adding 3 rd year online course	Faculty Dean: Support from AD (Teaching & Learning) as needed	Head, Undergraduate Chair and Committee		Study in 2025-26, for implementation in 26-27

Recommendation 6: We recommend the Department vary the annual complement of graduate course offerings so as to increase the number of course offerings available to PhD students who have done their MA at Queen’s. (Short-term goal; action for Department).

Planned Action	Deans’ Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Hire Adjunct via endowed fund to teach graduate course	Faculty Dean: N/A Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: Available for consultation if useful.	Department Head	If approved by FAS	Fall 2026

Recommendation 7: We recommend the Department strike formal (three person) dissertation committees once students have finished all their formal course work and as they begin working on their dissertation proposal. (Short-term goal; action for Department).

Planned Action	Deans’ Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Graduate Committee to study proposal and make recommendation.	Faculty Dean: Support from AD (graduate) as needed. Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: Available for consultation.	Graduate Chair, Committee		Study Fall 2025, report back with proposal by end of Winter 2026

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the Department take steps to make the requirements for PhD comprehensive exams more consistent across the fields in terms of issues such as the length of reading lists and referencing expectations. (Short-term goal; action for Department).

Planned Action	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Graduate Committee to measure extent of discrepancies and report back with recommendation to department.	Faculty Dean: Support from AD (graduate) as needed. Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: Available for consultation.	Graduate Chair, Committee		Study Fall 2025, report back with proposal in January 2026

Recommendation 9: We recommend the Department explore strategies to enhance the cohort experience for MA students, ranging from the hosting of more common extra-curricular events in the early stages of program to more ambitious ideas of creating a common core course. (Short-term goal; action for the Department).

Planned Actions	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Action A: Organize Graduate Research and Development Seminar (GRADS)	Faculty Dean: N/A Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: N/A	Prof. Gardner, in consultation with Graduate Chair, Committee		Planning occurred Spring and Summer 25, implementation Fall 2025

<p>Action B: Create required non-credit MA cohort class</p>	<p>Faculty Dean: Support from the AD (graduate) to build business case.</p> <p>Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: Available for consultation.</p>	<p>Graduate Chair and Committee</p>	<p>Will require approval by Graduate Council</p>	<p>Develop proposal Fall 25, for implementation Fall 26</p>
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Recommendation 10: We recommend the Department explore, in conjunction with other disciplines, the opportunity for a new interdisciplinary MA specialization in Gender and Security, and/or a new interdisciplinary MA in Democracy and Diversity. (Medium-term goal; action for the Department plus external Faculty of Arts and Science disciplines).

Planned Actions	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
<p>Action A: Discuss in Graduate Committee to identify concrete proposal</p>	<p>Faculty Dean: Support from AD (graduate) as needed.</p> <p>Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: Consultation as required.</p>	<p>Graduate Chair, Committee</p>		<p>Fall 2025</p>
<p>Action B: Discuss with cognate departments and centre Directors</p>	<p>Faculty Dean: N/A</p> <p>Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: Consultation as required.</p>	<p>Graduate Chairs in Cognate Departments; Directors of CIDP, CSDD</p>		<p>2025-26 and beyond</p>