



vpacad@sfu.ca  
www.sfu.ca/vpacademic  
TEL: 778.782.3925  
FAX: 778.782.5876


8888 University Drive  
Burnaby, BC  
Canada V5A 1S6

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**MEMORANDUM**

**ATTENTION** Senate  
**FROM** Wade Parkhouse, Provost and Vice-  
President Academic, and Chair, SCUP  
**RE:** External Review Report for the Department of Political Science (SCUP 22-30)

**DATE** December 7, 2022  
**PAGES** 1/1



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At its meeting on December 7, 2022, SCUP reviewed and approved the Action Plan for the Department of Political Science that resulted from its external review.

The Educational Goals Assessment Plan was reviewed and is attached for the information of Senate.

**Motion:** That Senate approve the Action Plan for the Department of Political Science that resulted from its external review.

C: A. Hira, L. Campbell



8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC  
Strand Hall, Room 3000  
Canada V5A 1S6

TEL: 778.782.5731  
FAX: 778.782.5876

vpacad@sfu.ca  
www.sfu.ca/vpacademic

**MEMORANDUM**

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**ATTENTION** Wade Parkhouse, Chair, SCUP **DATE** November 15, 2022  
**FROM** Kevin Oldknow, Senior Advisor, Academic **PAGES**  
Planning  
**RE:** External Review of the Department of Political Science

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Attached are the External Review Report and the Action Plan for the Department of Political Science. The Educational Goals Assessment Plan is included, for information only, with the Action Plan.

Excerpt from the External Review Report:

*“Our assessment is that the Department of Political Science delivers high-quality programs and conducts excellent, impact-oriented research. It also faces challenges, the most important of which being a weak sense of collective purpose which inhibits significant improvements. ... Throughout our visit, we felt that faculty members, staff, and students were aware of the main challenge this Department faces and ready to tackle it. ... Overall, the Department of Political Science does a good job of providing an attractive window into the discipline – one which distinguishes it from many other political science departments in Canada.”*

Following the site visit, the Report of the External Review Committee\* for the Department of Political Science was submitted in April 2022. The reviewers made a number of recommendations based on the Terms of Reference that were provided to them. Subsequently, a meeting was held with the dean *pro tem*, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the interim chair of the Department of Political Science, and the director of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (Provost’s Office) to consider the recommendations. An Action Plan was prepared taking into consideration the discussion at the meeting and the contents of the External Review Report. The Action Plan has been endorsed by the department and the dean.

**Motion:**

**That SCUP approve and recommend to Senate the Action Plan for the Department of Political Science that resulted from its external review.**

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\*External Review Committee:

Frédéric Mérand, University of Montreal (Chair of External Review Committee)  
Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, Queen’s University  
Claire Turenne Sjolander, University of Ottawa  
Maite Taboada (internal), Simon Fraser University

Attachments:

1. External Review Report (April 2022)
2. Department of Political Science Action Plan
3. Department of Political Science Educational Goals Assessment Plan
4. Feedback on Educational Goals Assessment Plan

cc Lara Campbell, Dean *pro tem*, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
Anil Hira, Interim Chair, Department of Political Science

## **External Review Committee Report**

### **Executive Summary**

- Through excellent and creative undergraduate and graduate programs, the Department of Political Science provides an attractive window into the discipline for students.
- The Department has a strong research profile based on high-quality individual achievements.
- The Department faces challenges translating the promise of its impressive curriculum into student recruitment and retention (at the undergraduate level) and maintaining a national reputation commensurate with its research output (at the graduate level).
- The Department could usefully highlight the full range of its research excellence.
- The organizational structure of the Department has improved over the past years and resources seem broadly adequate for its needs.
- Governance would benefit from improved procedures that would support greater inclusiveness, transparency, collegiality, and predictability, in the interest of faculty members, students, and staff.
- After years of constant turnover, attention to staff should be a high priority.

### **Background**

At the invitation of the Vice-President (Academic), the undersigned agreed to provide an external review report on the activities and future plans of the Department of Political Science at Simon Fraser University. In order to do so, we consulted the 656-page self-study report drafted by the Department as well as the Faculty of Arts and Social Science's academic plan and other relevant strategic documents. On March 16-18, 2022, we also spent two-and-a-half days, assisted by Professor Maita Taboada as internal committee member, on a site visit organized by the Office of the Vice-President, meeting with more than 40 professors, instructors, staff members, students, and administrators. In the following report, we address the terms of reference provided to us by the Vice-President. While we generally follow the subheadings suggested herein, the future plans and issues of specific interest identified by the Department are addressed in a transversal manner.

This review comes at the right moment for an organization which is at a crossroads. Our assessment is that the Department of Political Science delivers high-quality programs and conducts excellent, impact-oriented research. It also faces challenges, the most important of which being a weak sense of collective purpose which inhibits significant improvements. "We can't seem to make the whole more than the sum of its parts" is a sentence we often heard during our interviews. Throughout our visit, we felt that faculty members, staff, and students were aware of the main challenge this Department faces and ready to tackle it. Improving the Department is not just a matter of resources, branding, or new initiatives. It requires designing institutions and seizing opportunities that will help great individuals work together better, and more collegially. We hope

that our report will assist them moving forward in the direction they seem to have chosen. For ease of reading, our main recommendations are in bold characters.

## **Quality of the Department's Programs**

Curriculum and programs constitute a central pillar of any academic department. Attractive programs encourage recruitment of students into the discipline, ensuring not only the viability of the department's activities, but perhaps more importantly for a research department, the training and mentoring of future colleagues. Well-constructed programs allow a department to showcase its research strengths, building upon not only the general, but also the specific, research interests and outputs of a research-engaged faculty. For students, the curriculum is their window on the discipline in general, and on the research questions that motivate the discipline as reflected in the scholarship and teaching of professors at Simon Fraser University. Overall, the Department of Political Science does a good job of providing an attractive window into the discipline – one which distinguishes it from many other political science departments in Canada.

In its self-study, the Department asked external reviewers to offer advice on questions of specific interest, three of which relate to programs:

- How to boost undergraduate enrollment especially at the lower-division level.
- How to construct an organizational structure and capacity in the Department that is capable of managing the demands of undergraduate education and research administration efficiently.
- How to empower the Department to build out and expand its Experiential Teaching and Applied Research programs and plans.

### *Undergraduate Program*

Following a period of intense innovation and change, the Department's undergraduate program is organised around a series of five Learning Tracks (Diplomacy, Defence and Development; Diversity and Migration; Justice and Law; Public Policy and Democratic Governance; Research Methods and Analysis), structuring the curriculum into pathways enabling students to clearly identify the courses in their area of interest, but also ensuring that students fulfill their program requirements. In our conversation with representatives of the undergraduate students, they emphasized that the learning tracks are popular with students. This is not surprising; the tracks are mostly organized around areas of contemporary and disciplinary interest that are more descriptive and compelling than the traditional 'subfield' labels that organize the discipline of political science. Among some faculty members, there is a clear commitment to experiential learning and to integrating such experiences into courses where possible. The student representatives we met with appreciated this and were happy with their courses and the opportunities they presented, thereby confirming the views presented in the Department's self-study report.

The Department also contributes to distinct programs which can (and do) attract specific (and important) student communities. Key here is its unique French cohort program in International and Public Affairs, a rare and important gem in undergraduate education in Canada. While we did not have an opportunity to meet with students in the program, it is clear to us that the program's committed faculty members and engaged administrative leadership contributes to making this program one which is not only unique, but enriching for its students. The Department

also offers a highly personalized honours stream, as well as minors in Social Data Analytics and Public Policy, which can also be attractive to students. In addition, the Department has a deep sensitivity and commitment to methodological issues (which are, it should be noted, sometimes also the source of tension – see research section), but this sensitivity is translated into solid methodological training, which is not the case in all departments of political science. The Department is to be congratulated for the serious reflection and significant work that has led to a creative and interesting undergraduate program. A lot of thought and effort has gone into rationalizing the curriculum and to putting it together in such a way as to be attractive to entry-level political science students. The foundations are solid.

Having said this, the Department faces several challenges translating the promise of its impressive curriculum into student recruitment and retention. As mentioned, the students we met were happy with the program and were very positive about the quality of the teaching and the openness of faculty members in the Department. Despite this, they felt distant from the Department; undergraduate students shared their belief that the Department did not take them seriously, certainly not as compared to graduate students. Students felt that compared to other programs, the Department's outreach to undergraduate students was poor; they did not perceive strategic efforts to communicate with students in first-year political science courses to attract them to a political science major or minor.

While the impressions of student representatives do not necessarily reflect the views of the much larger cohort, the Department's self-study also reveals a concern with the recruitment of students to its undergraduate programs. While the Department is right to point to its curricular innovations, the pattern of enrollment suggests that there are some limits to a 'build it and they will come' strategy. **A better communication and outreach strategy based on the strengths and career prospects of a political science degree** might help to bridge the gap between the Department's programs and student awareness of and interest in them. It might also go some way to refuting one mantra we heard from student representatives – "If you take political science at SFU, you will be living in your parents' basement forever." The political science program at SFU is in fact hugely attractive, but if students don't know about it and its advantages or hear that the Department does not care about them, the prospects of success in recruiting students is limited.

Continuous engagement with students is challenging for any Department, and it is certainly the case that departmental cultures vary from institution to institution. The external review committee was surprised that students do not appear to have regular representation on Departmental bodies. Student representatives can be strong allies, and we encourage the Department of Political Science to **find ways to better integrate student input into departmental deliberations**. Sending a message that students are valued members of the community can be critical in supporting recruitment efforts.

We were also struck by the monstrous challenges that appear to be related to the organization of the allocation of teaching; course scheduling seems particularly complex and course attribution appears to be opaque, contributing to observable tensions between colleagues in the department. We strongly encourage the Department to **establish clear and transparent principles for the scheduling and attribution of courses**. As is the case in most other political science departments of which we are aware (including our own), these principles should be based upon an expectation of equitable load sharing: for example, everyone teaches a first- or second-year course, everyone teaches an upper-level undergraduate course, everyone has access to teaching a graduate course (annually? Every other year or every third year?). Paradoxically, while the Department has invested time and creativity in developing an attractive curriculum, the

scheduling of courses appears to reflect individual faculty members' individual preferences, rather than a concern with assuring access to courses by students (ie., leading to the offering of courses that should be taken by a cohort of students at overlapping or identical times). Without transparent principles, the suspicion that the attribution of courses is not equitable will continue to undermine departmental solidarity and compromise student recruitment and satisfaction.

The Department has devoted a lot of time and energy to the NATO Field School and the Chair is rightfully proud of its success. In spite of the significant resources committed, however, the Field School does not seem to engage the energies of other faculty members as much as it might, with the program being managed by short-duration faculty or graduate students. While the Field School is certainly popular with some students in the Department and more broadly at SFU, the School recruits a significant number of students from other universities and institutions. In the medium to longer term, decisions should probably be made as to **where the Field School "fits" into the range of offerings by the Department**, the Faculty and the University.

### *Graduate Program*

The graduate program in political science at SFU is a small program, particularly at the PhD level. It is, however, a strong program, and despite concerns expressed in the self-study report, we were first struck by the attractive funding program the Faculty and the Department offers to its graduate students, which certainly makes its graduate programs interesting to prospective candidates. Across Canada, these scholarships are competitive and SFU should be congratulated for the level of its financial support.

The self-study report created some confusion about time-to-completion for the master's and the PhD. We were able to obtain additional data from SFU, and calculated that over the previous decade, the average time to completion for master's candidates was 6.79 semesters (a little over 2 years) and for PhD candidates, was 18.71 semesters (a little over 6 years). While these numbers correspond to the disciplinary average time-to-completion (noting that such data is not comprehensively available), we were struck by a general lack of concern over time to completion. Given the challenges for graduate students who continue in their program beyond the duration of their funding, however, there is always an opportunity **to think through the requirements of a program and how its learning objectives or outcomes can be achieved more expeditiously**. While the challenges around time to completion are hardly limited to SFU (and are a rather chronic condition of the humanities and social sciences in general, and of political science more specifically), some thought should be given to encouraging students to complete more quickly, thus reducing financial anxiety.

In particular, we noted that most MA students register for the project option, and yet that the time to completion for this option was not significantly shorter than for the thesis option, suggesting that the Department might want to think through the clear distinction between the two pathways, as well as the clear objectives of each (we note that the completion time for projects in other universities is often less than the thesis option). At the same time, very few students registered for the course-based MA, an option which is proving very attractive at other institutions, particularly for students who do not see their future career in research, or who are upskilling to secure better career outcomes. The self-study report paints this option as a fall-back option ("This program has allowed students that find that they are not in a position to complete a project or thesis to still graduate with an MA degree"). While this is not an unusual perspective for a research-intensive department, perhaps some thinking could be done **to make the course-based option**

**more attractive**, thus appealing to a broader base of graduate students. In this context (also applicable to the undergraduate program), we wonder if the Department is taking full advantage of the range of Co-op and MITACS opportunities available to it. Such opportunities could attract a greater number of undergraduate students, as well as make the course-based master's option more attractive.

Our meeting with graduate student representatives reflected the broad conclusions of the self-study report. In general, graduate students recognized and were appreciative of the fact that they have access to good supervision. As was the case with their undergraduate colleagues, graduate students did however express a desire for a **common student lounge** which belonged to them. Such a common space might also encourage more students to be present on campus and enhance their experience of community (this is particularly the case for PhD candidates).

The graduate program is strong – but not sufficiently known in Canada and internationally. This, we believe, is a function of the challenges of community which are encountered by the Department. The graduate program needs to think about how to ‘brand’ itself – about how to sell its **distinctiveness around methodological training, critical thought, and unique areas of specialization such as democratic politics or International Relations**. The inability to do so seems to be a reflection of the challenges the Department faces in defining itself – yet, with such strong and productive researchers, the graduate program could attract a greater number of talented students. Even if the department does not want to grow, it could attract high quality students both domestically and internationally if it could articulate a strong and coherent vision of its graduate program.

## **Quality of Faculty Research**

SFU's Senate Guidelines state that the review process is intended to ensure the “quality of faculty research is high and faculty collaboration and interaction provides a stimulating academic environment,” and that the “unit's environment is conducive to the attainment of the objectives of the unit.” In its self-study, the Department asked external reviewers to offer advice on particular, additional questions, two of which relate to research:

- How to promote the Department's research profile to broaden its national and international reputation and to capitalize on that reputation through a larger and more vibrant graduate program.
- How to support the research of faculty through: shared resources, such as a research lab and grant administration; the research mentorship of junior faculty; matching funds for research assistantships; and supporting collaboration amongst faculty.

SFU Political Science is a strong research department. The quality of individual faculty members' research is high. This has led to success in external grants, resulting in approximately \$3.5 million from major Canadian and international funders over the past eight years or an average of \$50K per year per faculty member. Faculty publish often and in good outlets, producing a strong “academic footprint” on the discipline (e.g., median H-index of 11, publishing in broad array of outlets and many top outlets). On all the usual types of metrics the Department is performing well. Faculty members seem well supported by the Department too – for example, through a new one-course buyout policy, to be used once in a career, for successful PI winners of large external grants.

This Department is also strong on knowledge mobilization and translation beyond the academy, including through reports, government and NGO consultations, and media.

The Department's self-study highlights cutting-edge research in distinct areas such as behavioural politics and IR, and our meetings during the site visit focused often on these two areas. However, the research strengths of the Department are much broader, including work on social groups and identities (race and ethnicity, sex/gender, and language) using a variety of approaches. This includes, for example, Weldon's work on feminist movements, markets, and state responses; Pickup and de Rooij's work on social and political identities in political psychology; Fuji-Johnson's research on sex work and sexualized violence, as well as whiteness in the academy; Léger's work on minority language rights; Beauvais' work on gender and deliberative democracy, as well as Indigenous-settler dynamics in political psychology, Fourot's work on Francophone minority communities and immigration, Jeram's work on diversity and nationalism/nativism.

There are, in our view, missed opportunities in the Department to highlight or frame itself in terms of the full range of its research excellence, particularly to capitalize on expertise in the area of social groups and identities, consistent with the SFU Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' 5-year academic plan. This plan is built around three guiding principles, two of which are "Advancing Reconciliation" and "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion". SFU's Strategic Research Plan identifies "Strengthening Civil Society by Advancing Justice, Equity and Social Responsibility" as a core focus point for SFU researchers, "to understand the complexity of the social, economic and political forces that challenge global communities." While these Faculty and University plans are not really mentioned in the self-study, this Department is doing important work on these subjects, and it's something that faculty members see too. Appreciation for the diversity of subjects and approaches across faculty was reported widely in our interactions with Department members (faculty and students). To speak to the focus question posed by the Department about building research profile and recruiting graduate students, one clear option is to **better frame and publicize the full diversity of research expertise and researchers in the Department**. This would have the added benefit of ensuring that all researchers and students in the Department feel acknowledged and valued, which may help with the second focus question, particularly around encouraging an ethos of mentorship and collaboration.

The second focus question speaks to common issues in many departments around optimal use of resources, research administrative burden, mentorship of early-career faculty, and so on. In terms of research space, the **Department is encouraged to re-apply for external funding for the Behavioural Insights Lab**, which is an interesting initiative that complements some of the research and teaching strengths of the Department. On the issue of space, we want to mention again that it would also be useful to have an **inclusive research space for graduate students**, some of whom do not perceive there to be available spaces for doing work quietly and so avoid coming to campus at all. In other words, while the Department is thinking about how it can harness its space for research productivity, attention to a diverse range of Department stakeholders' space needs is recommended. This consideration is also relevant to the Department's desire to bolster its graduate applicant pool. Enhanced amenities such as an inclusive graduate student research space could be part of this effort.

The mentorship of early-career faculty tends to be overlooked everywhere, and is not a concern unique to this Department. It is particularly hard when there are so few early-career faculty in a unit, such as in this one. Annual or twice-annual informal meetings between the Department Chair and each pre-tenure faculty to check in and discuss research, teaching, and service could be helpful, not only connecting with early-career researchers, but establishing a genuine path for



communication. Pairing pre-tenure faculty with a tenured faculty member in another department could also be helpful and provide an outlet for honest discussion for the pre-tenure faculty in a “space” away from their home department. **Mentorship is particularly important** for early-career faculty from marginalized communities, an issue that requires particular care in a unit that continues to work on under-representation of key groups in its ranks, particularly women, Indigenous peoples, and so on, which is another common experience across some departments in the country.

The final point to make about the research life of the Department concerns its Tier-1 Canada Research Chair (CRC). The research record of the CRC is clearly phenomenal but, to our surprise, we did not have any communication with the Chairholder during or after our visit, and were given no information about the graduate students trained or involved in the CRC. At the very least, this suggests that there are unfulfilled opportunities for the CRC to contribute as a “centre of research and training” that benefits the Department and/or its graduate students.

## **Departmental life and governance**

Under this heading, we report on the Department of Political Science as a site of administrative participation as well as a workplace environment. SFU’s Senate Guidelines state that the review process is intended to ensure that “members participate in the administration of the unit and take an active role in the dissemination of knowledge”, but also that “the environment is conducive to the attainment of the objectives”. In its self-study, the Department asks external reviewers to offer specific advice on the following focus question:

- How to construct an organizational structure and capacity in the Department that is capable of managing the demands of undergraduate education and research administration efficiently.

In our assessment, the self-study correctly identifies the main strengths and weaknesses of the Department, whose excellence in teaching and research, commitment to scientific pluralism, and individual goodwill have not yet generated a strong sense of community or identity. It is, in other words, a department of competent and engaged individuals (whether researchers, teachers, or staff) that would benefit from developing a more widely shared sense of collective purpose through social interaction and joint decision-making.

During our visit, vivid emotions were often expressed that had been left implicit in the self-study and cannot easily be conveyed in our own report. Some of the challenges the Department faces seem to derive from past wounds which haven’t entirely healed yet; others may owe to the growing pains of a mid-size department which is on the cusp of being a large one. Rather than dwell on such, necessarily subjective, appreciations, we prefer to focus our review on concrete recommendations for improving processes in a way that will, we hope, foster an improved governance structure as well as a stronger social and professional culture.

### *Governance*

In our meetings, there was general agreement that human relations had improved greatly under the current chair, and that the Department had stabilized after years of turmoil. Such improvement seems to have been based on a liberal governance, genuine respect for each other, and a widely

shared willingness to find solutions. Recent faculty hires and faculty renewal plans are generally seen in a positive light. But the upbeat attitude towards individuals and programs in the Department is accompanied by frank expressions of concern about the perceived lack of collegiality. In English, collegiality refers to a friendly relationship between people who work together. In French, the same word also carries a sense of joint decision-making. Through multiple and converging testimonies, we felt it was especially the latter that is lacking in the Department. The travails of joint decision-making lead for several members to a lack of trust and what someone referred to as a “zero-sum mindset”.

The executive committee, made up of the chair, the graduate chair and the undergraduate chair, is a governance structure that seems to work. Given the challenge of inclusiveness mentioned below, we welcome the proposal to add a fourth member to give the ExCom more representation and inclusion, without turning it into an unwieldy body. In the past, it seems that processes for program changes, course and space allocation, as well as chair renewal have been governed by ad hoc measures. The organization of “open meetings” that allow members to contribute to program committee proposals before they get to the departmental meeting level is, in theory, a transparent and efficient way to streamline the decision-making process. However, course allocation seems to remain an irritant: while some instructors complain that it is too liberal, with no regards to scheduling constraints or student needs, others say they have been prevented from teaching in their area of specialization. We thus support the idea of **rationalizing the teaching plans and schedules**, through “track-and-field” meetings or any other means that would reconcile the ability of instructors to express their preferences, the curricular obligations of program chairs, and oversight on the part of the departmental chair.

In a key finding that emerged from our visit, the departmental meeting is reputed to be acrimonious. While tense departmental meetings are not uncommon in universities throughout the world, we had a hard time reconciling this widely shared perception with the goodwill expressed by everyone we met. One member explained the situation as “a lot of people feel they’re in a minority position” while another spoke of a “culture of obstructionism”. While we did not observe such meetings, we were struck during our face-to-face meetings by the Department’s tendency to think of itself as being structured around subfields or methodological schools, with assumed internal coherence and autonomy vis-à-vis each other, possibly leading to the formation of opposing “camps”. Leaving aside the fact that that the vast majority of the members we met did not recognize themselves as belonging to a specific group, there was a widespread acknowledgement that some may feel excluded by such an informal social structure, if it indeed exists. To be frank, the authors of this report are not convinced that thinking in terms of subfields or methodological schools is the right way to build a common, inclusive sense of purpose. So we propose another strategy, which is to build **a common set of rules that will be transparent, predictable, fair, and modifiable through collective deliberation** – in other words, a constitution. The Department has begun to try to rectify the lack of regularized and transparent procedures “in specific areas as the need arose” but they still seem to be inadequate in the sense that many people do not seem to know what the rules are and some people still say they feel excluded. In fact, we were surprised that no one mentioned a departmental constitution, which was also not included in the self-study or its appendices. Yet is there is a better way to shape joint decision-making and reduce mistrust than a commonly agreed set of rules?

If such a constitution were either drafted, revised, or resurrected, it would probably need to address one aspect that does not seem in line with standard practice at SFU or other Canadian universities: the **lack of an institutional voice for students** at the departmental level. The self-

study speaks of a graduate caucus whose remit would be limited to social events. That is probably not enough to create a sense of inclusion and collective purpose. Although the small cohort of graduate students seem generally well-integrated in the Department, mostly through informal channels, undergraduate students say that they are not. That is, in our view, a problem that must be tackled with some urgency.

In sum, we believe that the Department is on the right track of trying to establish more regularized, predictable, transparent procedures for course and space allocation, chair nomination, and changes to the curriculum. In addition, we would encourage it to give an institutional voice to student representatives. Our recommendation is to engage in a reflexive and inclusive process to either draft or update the Department's constitution, with a view to adopting a clear set of by-laws that will formalize the Department's governance and make it more transparent and inclusive.

### *Work relations*

Turning to work relations, most members talked of friendly and supportive relations on an individual level. Socially, if not always professionally, people seem to get along well, as we witnessed at a social event where people mingled in a friendly manner. Regarding careers, there is widespread criticism of the merit pay determination system's impact on interpersonal relations but we do not feel this is something that can be addressed in the context of this report. Although a departmental mentorship program could be expected for junior faculty at a department of this size (it seems to exist at the University level), the promotion criteria listed in the appendix seem to be well understood. At a minimum, we would however recommend that the **chair hold a yearly meeting with all faculty members and instructors**, as noted above, and that mentors be identified inside and outside the Department.

The self-study and face-to-face interviews report either a lack of administrative capacity or administrative impediments to support research, teaching, and relations with students. Our interviews confirm the self-study's findings of high staff turnover leading to a lack of institutional memory and a sense of disconnection between staff and faculty. Some staff members feel they are asked to do things that are outside the scope of their job description, while some faculty say they do not know who to turn to for assistance, for example in managing their research funds or organizing scientific activities for the collective benefit. While some improvements have been made, such as the designation of Student Adviser and Recruiter to assist the Administrative Manager, it is clear that **attention to staff should be a high priority**, and that the Department may need FASS and HR support to instill greater stability and clarify expectations for staff and for faculty.

### *Professional and social culture*

There is a very large consensus that the main challenge facing the Department is to develop a sense of community in a university that is characterized, we were told, by its "commuter culture". Even more so after Covid-19. Although it could be expanded to target themes and speakers that would attract a greater number of undergraduate students through **keynote conferences and roundtables** (with the collateral benefit of promoting political science programs to undeclared majors), the speakers' series is a good way to foster the social interaction and scientific emulation that will supportive of a social and professional culture. Breaking the "culture of isolation" would also

benefit from other measures identified in the self-report, such as resuming in-person retreats and organizing social events (for example after departmental meetings).

But another culture that must be broken is the perception, shared at least by some members, that “if you want something done, you do not go through the department”. For that to happen, good governance and good work relations are key. It is also critical that members use all the opportunities available at Faculty or University level. The Department wants to see itself as a good citizen that contributes to FASS undertakings and maintains good relations with other departments, such as Economics and Criminology with which it develops collaborations on joint programs such as the minors. The French Cohort program is a gem with few equivalents in Canada. This speaks to a Department that is generally a positive force for the university.

In sum, the organizational structure of the Department is adequate but would benefit from greater inclusiveness and formalization, which would require either drafting or updating a set of by-laws through an open and transparent process. Along with the activities proposed in the self-study to stimulate social and professional life in the Department, we are confident that “formalized collegiality” would help foster a greater sense of collective purpose. With regards to staff, the capacity of the Department would be improved by more stability and clearer expectations.

*The committee,*

Frédéric Mérand (chair), Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant and Claire Turenne Sjolander

April 28, 2022

## EXTERNAL REVIEW – ACTION PLAN

<b>Section 1 – To be completed by the Responsible Unit Person e.g. Chair or Director</b>			
<b>Unit under review</b> Political science .....	<b>Date of Review Site visit</b> March 16-18, 2022 .....	<b>Responsible Unit person</b> Anil Hira .....	<b>Faculty Dean</b> .....
<b><u>Notes</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is <b><i>not</i></b> expected that every recommendation made by the External Review Committee be covered by this Action Plan. The major thrusts of the Report should be identified and some consolidation of the recommendations may be possible while other recommendations of lesser importance may be excluded.</li> <li>2. Attach the required plan to assess the success of the <b>Educational Goals</b> as a separate document (Senate 2013).</li> <li>3. Should any additional response be warranted, it should be attached as a separate document.</li> </ol>			
<b>1. PROGRAMMING</b>			
<b>1.1 Action/s (description what is going to be done):</b>			
<b>1.1.1 Undergraduate:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strengthen our outreach strategy to better communicate with undergraduate students and better promote our program options (Honours, Major, Minor, French Cohort Program, NATO Field School, Social Data Analytics Minor, Co-op)                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use the visual (“Your POL Journey”) developed by the previous UG Chair that helps Major students to select courses and develop similar visuals for other program options.</li> <li>b. Hold annual events with alumni to showcase career prospects</li> <li>c. In collaboration with the Communications Coordinator and the Undergraduate Advisor, set up events where UG students can meet faculty outside of class.</li> <li>d. With the support of the Communications Coordinator, expand our use of the website, social media and the Department newsletter to better communicate with former, current and future students</li> <li>e. Organize brief presentations on program options in all 100-level courses</li> <li>f. Attend FASS and university-wide events destined at potential, incoming and current students, such as FASS Welcome Day</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Continue to develop our policies and procedures around scheduling and course allocation                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Implement recently developed scheduling principles to reduce scheduling time conflicts</li> </ol> </li> </ul>			

b. Better align course scheduling with the department's learning tracks

- Renew the relationship with the PSSU
  - a. Invite the PSSU to attend our Department meetings
  - b. Schedule recurring meetings between the Undergraduate Program Chair and the PSSU
  - c. Organize events (alumni, research, etc.) in collaboration with the PSSU

#### **1.1.2 Graduate:**

- Better feature Dept. research strengths:
  - a. We will work with our communications coordinator to better highlight faculty strengths and opportunities to engage in research.
- As part of our self-study for this review, we have identified specific goals for both the MA and PhD programs. We will continue to examine ways to monitor students' progress on these goals.
- Clarify the MA paths to completion. These currently include course-based (capped by an exam or essay), project/extended essays, and thesis options.
  - a. We will work to clarify the definitions and requirements of our MA completion options.
  - b. We will assess whether to retain all the currently offered options.
- Improve MA and PhD completion times:
  - a. Formulate a plan to track progress on a more systematic basis and identify means for early intervention, such as the Graduate Chair holding meetings with students and/or supervisors, to reduce the possibility of future students taking a long time to complete.
  - b. Create a formal extension policy to be posted on the Department website to create better accountability and provide further opportunities for intervention.
- Improving communications and relationships with graduate students
  - a. We do have a graduate student lounge, and will continue to promote knowledge about its availability to students. In addition, the faculty lounge has been opened up to Graduate students to promote more social interaction.
  - b. We are shifting towards a model of ongoing engagement with the graduate students. Faculty and graduate students have met at 2 happy hours in May 2022 and June 2022.
  - c. We have invited the PS graduate students to send a representative to Dept. meetings.
  - d. The graduate Chair is engaged in a series of meetings with graduate students to develop new events and ways to engage.
- Promoting graduate student research activity:

- a. The Speakers Committee will invite graduate students to join panels with faculty commentary to present their ongoing research, followed by social events. The students have expressed enthusiasm over this plan.
- b. The Dept. will more vigorously promote and support professional conference participation by graduate students. Funds have already been set aside for this.

**1.2 Resource implications (if any):** We will need to re-allocate some PS Dept. budget towards the activities noted above.

**1.3 Expected completion date/s:** Most of the above actions will take place over the coming year, and recur on an ongoing basis.

## 2. RESEARCH

### 2.1 Action/s (what is going to be done):

- The Department has a combination of unique offerings that combine research with student training and experiential opportunities. These include:
  - a. The Clean Energy Research Group: <http://www.sfu.ca/politics/CERG.html>
  - b. Feminist Mobilization and Economic Empowerment Project: <http://www.sfu.ca/politics/feministmovement.html>
  - c. Canadian University Diversity Scan, <http://www.sfu.ca/politics/canadian-university-diversity-scan.html>
  - d. Digital Diplomacy, <http://www.sfu.ca/politics/digital-diplomacy.html>
  - e. Governance of Migration, <http://www.sfu.ca/politics/governance-migration.html>
  - f. The CRC Chair in Public Policy, Dr. Howlett, offers regular student RA and co-authorship opportunities, and has agreed to participate with the Chair in designing public events around public policy
  - g. Our incoming Somjee Chair will help to provide student field research opportunities in India
  - h. In addition, we offer advanced student research training opportunities through our Honour's Programme, the NATO field school, the Social Data Analytics, the French Cohort Programme, and the Public Policy Minor, to be launched in Fall 2023
- The Department is currently engaged in developing a policy research insights lab that will create new primary data on political attitudes and behaviour. The lab is tentatively focused on social identities, equality, and diversity issues, which fits in with SFU's strategic goals.
- The Department continues to celebrate the diversity and mixed methods approach of its faculty. We will promote a wide range of approaches in our teaching and research. The Department will continue to support faculty to develop research projects and collaborations.
  - a. The Dept. set aside funds to host a reception at the Western PS Assn. conference that will help to enhance its reputation.
  - b. The Dept. has offered some funding to help support open access publications.
- The Department is hiring a new Somjee Chair in Indian Politics. We hope that the process will be completed by Sept. 2022. This will bring attention and possibilities for comparative research and global collaboration.



- The Department is working with our communications coordinator to reach out through social media and events to better publicize research strengths. For example, the Chair is working with other SFU units around a public engagement event related to corporate social responsibility in Fall 2022.

## **2.2 Resource implications (if any):**

- We expect to continue raising funds for the lab over the next 5 years, subject to Dept. approval. Dr. Pickup is leading a CFI proposal to complete the funding.

## **2.3 Expected completion date/s: 2028 for the lab.**

# **3. ADMINISTRATION**

## **3.1 Action/s (what is going to be done):**

- The Department will begin a long-term process of governance reform with the leadership of the Chair.
  - a. The Department will develop a new constitution, and new policies and procedures, including ones around agenda-setting.
  - b. The Department will discuss programme priorities and faculty renewal.
- The Department is rebuilding its staff and hopes to stabilize support personnel over the coming year.
  - a. We are undergoing an HR review led by the new Dept. manager to clarify staff roles and workloads. This has been initiated in Summer 2022.
  - b. We have a new manager, advisor, communications person, grad and undergrad secretaries, all of whom are continuing to improve their performance as they learn their duties.
- The Department manager and the Chair will work over the next year to create a more transparent and rational budget and course release policy.
- The Department Chair will begin the process of creating a rational system around curriculum planning and course allocation.

**3.2 Resource implications (if any):** none, there may be shifts in the budget as decision-making becomes more transparent and participatory.

**3.3 Expected completion date/s:** The current Chair will begin the process of governance reform, but it may take several years to complete it.

## 4. WORKING ENVIRONMENT

**4.1 Action/s (what is going to be done):**

- Reinitiate annual meetings between the Chair and every faculty member
  - a. The Chair has already held one-hour meetings with every faculty member. Future chairs can continue this on an annual basis, and/or in conjunction with biennial reviews.
- The Department will help to reinvigorate collegiality through developing stronger personal relationships.
  - a. The Department will shift its meetings to Fridays, generally at Harbour Centre, in order to facilitate in person meeting attendance. The meetings will be followed by a faculty-staff luncheon invitation.
  - b. As noted above, the Dept. has already and will continue to design social and professional in person meetings with students on a regular basis.
- As noted above, the Dept. will examine its long-term curriculum development at both the G and UG levels and the way that courses are allocated among instructors, including reliability, timing, WQB requirements, and workload.
  - i. The Department started to shift in this direction last Spring with adopting principles around course scheduling that help to avoid courses at the same levels being scheduled at the same times.
  - j. The Chair will seek out and present different models for course planning in order to rationalize the system and consider equity workload in teaching and service.

**4.2 Resource implications (if any):** The Dept. may need to re-allocate some funding to support social activities.

**4.3 Expected completion date/s:** will occur on an ongoing basis.

**5. .... (OTHER)**


**5.1 Action/s:**

- Highlighting and building upon Dept. strengths.
  - a. The Chair will seek to develop a mission statement for the Dept. over the coming year that will help us to better define a long-term strategy and way to differentiate it from other PS Depts. in Canada and elsewhere. If and when consensus is achieved, it will help to bring the Dept. together and improve our ability to communicate what we are about to the students and the wider audience of scholars. This would also help us to better define ourselves in terms of graduate student recruitment efforts.
- NATO field school
  - a. The Department will examine the long-term resource needs of the field school and have an open discussion about the level of support it wishes to provide. This will take place in Spring 2023 and be linked to the next faculty resource plan.
- The Department will initiate the process of selecting a new Chair in Spring 2023.

**5.2 Resource implications (if any):** unclear at this point, would likely require an ongoing administrative assistant position and a full time lecturer position

**5.3 Expected completion date/s:** Spring/Summer 2023

The above action plan has been considered by the Unit under review and has been discussed and agreed to by the Dean.

<b>Unit Leader (signed)</b>   <b>Name</b> ..... <b>Title</b> Professor and Acting Chair.....	<b>Date</b> <b>Aug. 3, 2022</b> .....
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## **Section 2 - Dean's comments and endorsement of the Action Plan:**

I met with Professor Andy Hira, Bal Basi, and Glynn Nicholls to discuss the external review action plan of the Political Science Department in September 2022. The department has responded to the external review with clear action items intending to improve communication and program completion with undergraduate and graduate students, and to engage in an internal process of governance renewal and improvement of policies, processes, and procedures.

In regard to undergraduate students (Section 1), the department plan to improve communication and to better promote a diverse range of program options, as well as to implement a new process of course scheduling (in order to reduce course conflicts for students) will help to improve the student experience in the department. The emphasis on renewed and active relationships with the Political Science Student Union (PSSU) and graduate students and graduate student representatives (Section 1) is a welcome plan, especially the commitment to invite student representation at departmental meetings. Additionally, support for and/or collaboration with undergraduate and graduate students on a range of student-centred events will strengthen the collegial and supportive relationships between faculty and Political Science students. The Department plan to work with the Graduate Chair/Committee (Section 1.1.2) to improve MA/PhD completion times, clarify program options (especially at the MA level), and introduce systemic progress check-ins between graduate students and the Graduate Chair will in turn improve the graduate student experience and allow for progress through the programs. The Faculty welcomes the plan to increase the diverse research profile of the Department (Section 2) and will continue to work with the Chair to discuss support of projects identified by the Department as high priority in the plan.

The Department action plan to initiate a process of governance reform (Section 3) is a welcome commitment and responds clearly to the external review. This process will be supported by the Faculty as needed and requested. In particular, the development of an updated constitution, a clear and transparent set of policies and processes related to setting meeting agendas, budget allocation/spending, offers of course releases, setting faculty renewal priorities, and undertaking course scheduling and course allocation will improve communication, equity, and transparency in the department (Section 4.1). The Faculty will also support the HR review of staffing workload (Section 3.1) at the appropriate time. The clear actions outlined in Section 3 (administration and governance reform) will be an important way to strengthen the collegiality and the working environment as outlined in Section 4 of the Action Plan.

**Faculty Dean**

*Lara Campbell*

.....

**Date**

**21 October 2022**

## Educational Goals Assessment Plan Template

Unit/Program: Political Science

Contact name: Anil Hira

Date: Aug. 3, 2022

This template is designed to help units implement assessment of Educational Goals after receiving feedback from their External Review. Units are not expected to assess every Educational Goal every year. *(Textboxes will expand as you type)*

**1) Who were the members of your Educational Goals Assessment team? Outline who has worked on the assessment.**

Aaron Hoffman, UG Chair; Mark Pickup, G Chair, Alex Moens, Chair  
The goals were set up as part of the self study during Spring 2022.

**2) Are your program's Educational Goals current, or do any of them need to be revised?**

In some cases, Educational Goals may need to be revised to keep apace with changes in the discipline or in the program's course offerings, or to ensure they continue to align with a unit's mission and values. Feedback from the External Review may inform revision of Educational Goals.

The goals are current, but will be reviewed and updated before the next external review.

**3) Is your program's curriculum map up to date?**

A curriculum map may need to be updated to reflect any major changes to the program's course offerings (i.e. new or substantially revised courses, courses that have been removed).

Yes, Dr. Hoffman has created the curriculum map recently. It can be found at:  
<http://www.sfu.ca/politics/undergraduate/pol-journey.html>

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**4) Assessment Plan**

For each Educational Goal, outline what data you will use to assess student learning. Indicate what direct evidence you will draw on - which key courses you will sample from and, if possible, the course-based assessments you plan to use. These can be described in general terms (e.g. research paper, final exam questions targeting a particular Educational Goal). Indicate also whether or not you plan to gather indirect evidence (e.g. surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.). The same indirect evidence method (e.g. a survey) can be used for multiple Educational Goals. Describe what would indicate to you that students had met the Educational Goal. Add or delete rows as needed.

<b>Educational Goal 1: UG goal #1: Knowledge and Cognitive skills- knowledge base &amp; methodological skills</b>			
<p><b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students)            Random sample of 4<sup>th</sup> year student papers from several courses            Or pre-test of sample questions at the beginning of a class followed by a post-class test (or part of an exam) that includes the same question, to see the % of students who improved</p> <p>We will leave the choice up to the instructor.</p>	<p><b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b>            The papers demonstrate knowledge of the concepts and the ability to use data in a research paper.</p>	<p><b>Is this direct or indirect?</b>            Direct</p>	<p><b>When do you plan to collect the data?</b>            This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p>
<b>Educational Goal 2: UG goal # 2: Applied Skills- tackling real world problems</b>			
<p><b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students)            Random sample of 4<sup>th</sup> year student papers from several courses</p>	<p><b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b>            The papers show the ability to apply concepts to real world problems and the ability to develop and use primary data in appropriate ways.</p>	<p><b>Is this direct or indirect?</b>            Direct</p>	<p><b>When do you plan to collect the data?</b>            This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p>
<b>Educational Goal 3: UG goal # 3: Experience and Perspective- tolerance, diversity, and community</b>			
<p><b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students)            A survey of graduating students will be set up with staff assistance.</p>	<p><b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b></p>	<p><b>Is this direct or indirect?</b>            indirect</p>	<p>Annually, e-mail survey sent to all</p>

	Survey questions would ask them about whether their education has made them aware of community issues and indirect questions about their views on handling diverse perspectives on issues.		POL majors and minors.
<b>Educational Goal 4: Grad Goal #1: Strong knowledge base of the range of analytical and epistemological approaches and methods in political science</b>			
<b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) -Assessment of course syllabi of POL 800, 801, 802 and 803 and of MA and PhD project papers/theses by Graduate Chair/Committee. -Within-course assessment by instructors. -Participation in Departmental methods workshops and attendance at methods summer schools.	<b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b> -Course syllabi reflect a range of analytical and epistemological approaches and methods in political science, and the project papers/theses show a mastery of research design, qualitative and quantitative methods -Within-course student improvement based on pre- and post-tests -Participation levels in workshops and summer schools	<b>Is this direct or indirect?</b> Direct	<b>When do you plan to collect the data?</b> This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.
<b>Educational Goal 5: Grad Goal # 2: Familiarity with the literatures, and ability to understand and conduct research in two of the major fields of study offered by the Department</b>			
<b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) -Assessment of MA and PhD field exams/project papers/theses/comprehensive exams by Graduate Chair/Committee. -Within-course assessment by instructors.	<b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b> -The field exams/project papers/theses/comprehensive exams demonstrate knowledge of the key debates in at least one subfield -Students have taken courses in at least two subfields -PhD students have taken comprehensive exams in two different subfields -Within-course student improvement based on term papers	<b>Is this direct or indirect?</b> Direct	<b>When do you plan to collect the data?</b> This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.
<b>Educational Goal 6: Grad Goal #3: Professional and personal development</b>			
<b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) -Student participation in Dept. and professional panels and conferences, including Dept. professional development workshops; student participation in co-ops; -Exit survey of graduate students (self-assessment)	<b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b> -Participation levels in related events -Discussion with alumni	<b>Is this direct or indirect?</b> Direct	<b>When do you plan to collect the data?</b> This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.
<b>Educational Goal 7: Grad Goal # 4: Skills and attitudes for instructional success</b>			

<p><b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students)          -Student instructional skills development through participation in SFU and Dept. instructional skills workshops; experience as tutor marker, TA, and/or instructor          -Course instructor assessment of TAs</p>	<p><b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b>          Experience verified</p>	<p><b>Is this direct or indirect?</b>          Direct</p>	<p><b>When do you plan to collect the data?</b>          This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p>
<p><b>Educational Goal 8: Success in early dissemination and publication of academic work</b></p>			
<p><b>Description of Assessment Methods:</b> (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students)          -Systematic collection of data on students' conference attendance and publications          -Exit survey of graduate students</p>	<p><b>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</b>          Number of conference presentations and publications by graduate students</p>	<p><b>Is this direct or indirect?</b></p>	<p><b>When do you plan to collect the data?</b>          Annually</p>

**5) How do you plan on sharing your findings within your unit?**

The above actions will be done by instructors in cooperation with the Chair, UG and G chairs and staff before the next external review, other than the graduating student survey, which will be done annually. The findings will then be shared with the Dept. for comments before completing the self-study. We will then examine our educational goals and revise them if necessary.

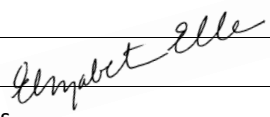
**6) Assessment Timeline**

Next Mid-cycle Review: 2026

Next External Review: 2028



MEMORANDUM

<b>ATTENTION:</b>	SCUP
<b>FROM:</b>	Elizabeth Elle, Vice-Provost, Learning & Teaching 
<b>RE:</b>	External Review of Political Science, and Educational Goals
<b>DATE:</b>	November 1, 2022

In 2022, the Department of Political Science underwent their external review. As part of this process, the unit updated their educational goals (EGs), and provided an assessment plan.

Political Science has set up a great [web page](#) to help students understand how to navigate through a degree, but would benefit from producing a curriculum map that would link their individual EGs to the courses or experiences where the EG is taught or assessed at an introductory, intermediate, or advanced level. Such a map can assist the unit in deciding which courses to focus on to meet the goals they have for their program. Political Science has a small number of stated EGs articulated for each of their undergraduate and graduate degrees (which is good!) but these goals are currently very broad and could likely use either refinement or the articulation of sub-goals. The department has also started to consider how to assess EGs; the ideas for direct assessment (considering sampling student papers, or looking at text questions) and indirect assessments (surveys) are a good start, but will need refinement and clearer definition to be actionable. Next steps for assessment normally follows naturally from well-defined EGs and a curriculum map. The timeline likewise needs adjustment to the mid-cycle report, at which time we would normally expect some insight into the EGs and whether students are attaining them.

SFU has staff who can assist with the setting and assessing of educational goals. In addition to visiting our [resource page](#), I encourage you to reach out to [LEAP](#), the Learning Experiences Assessment and Planning unit, who can assist you with this work.