

TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: December 17, 2014

FROM: Robert A. Boudreau
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Department of Political Science, Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Department of Political Science at its November 28, 2014 meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review comprised Harold Jansen (Program Review Coordinator) and Alan Siaroff. The review produced four documents:

1. *Department of Political Science: Self Study Report* (received February 13, 2014) - developed by the Department of Political Science Self Study Committee.
2. *University of Lethbridge, Department of Political Science: External Review Report* (received July 3, 2014) – External Review Report by Heather Smith (UNBC) and Brian Tanguay (Wilfred Laurier) based on their site visit of May 7 – 8, 2014.
3. *Response to the Report of the External Reviewers for the Department of Political Science* (received September 4, 2014) – response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.
4. *Dean's Response to Quality Assurance Review of the Department of Political Science* (received October 23, 2014) – response to the review, written by Craig Cooper, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

1 All documents are available upon request.

Self Study

The Self Study Report summarized the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the Department of Political Science:

<i>Strengths:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High quality instruction.• A commitment to excellence in the academic and student experience.• A large number of Political Science majors, especially in relation to the size of the department.• Graduates have successful careers and are satisfied with the quality of education they received.• Faculty have high levels of research and publication.• Enrolments have stabilized and are starting to increase.• The major for the B.A. and the B.A./B.Ed. programs is streamlined and flexible.
<i>Weaknesses:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity of course offerings is weakened by a small faculty complement.• The faculty complement lacks diversity in approaches to the subject matter.• Lack of resources to offer adequate graduate programming.• No new faculty have been added to the department since 2001, which has affected the sense of community in the department.• The department feels isolated from the Faculty of Arts and Science and from the University as a whole.
<i>Opportunities:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If pending retirements are replaced, then the department can potentially reduce the overabundance of courses in the Canadian politics subfield.• New hires have the potential to reinvigorate the department.• The Destination Project affords an opportunity to physically relocate and restructure the department.
<i>Threats:</i>	<p><i>Long-term threats –</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The decreasing political engagement among youth lowers demand for Political Science programming.• Poor preparation in political science at the secondary level means that students entering university have little understanding of the discipline and what it can offer.• Provincial and federal government budget cuts have reduced the number of public sector jobs, the jobs for which political science education is perceived to be preparation.• Decreased funding for traditional academic programs like political science due to overemphasis on funding career preparation programs.• Fewer available resources due to fiscal restraint. <p><i>Immediate threats -</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A key faculty retirement.2. Low morale and engagement among faculty members.3. Support for undergraduate grading has been stopped, which has made the department less able to evaluate students through written work.

The report made the following recommendations:

1. When the planned retirement of one faculty member happens, hire a full-time tenure-track faculty member as replacement, ideally in International Relations.
2. If the currently frozen seventh full-time tenure-track position cannot be restored to the department, in the interim fund a three-year term appointment.
3. To participate meaningfully in graduate studies will require additional full-time faculty appointments.
4. Address faculty diversity in all future hires.
5. Without additional faculty resources, continue the current departmental policy of rarely accepting graduate students.
6. When University Hall is renovated as part of the Destination Project, relocate the department so it is closer to its cognate departments.
7. During Destination Project renovations, reconfigure the department's space to facilitate a greater sense of community and identity.
8. Create an Undergraduate Advisor position, filled by a department faculty member.
9. Create an annual "Dave Elton Lecture" and colloquium series, and appoint an Events/Lecture Coordinator.
10. Consider several curriculum changes: (a) Open POLI 2110 - International Relations and POLI 2511 - Introduction to Political Theory to students who have completed seven Arts and Science courses but no Political Science courses; (b) end the cross-listing of MGT 3050 - Human Resource Management as POLI 3420; (c) eliminate the Economics prerequisite for POLI 3270 - Canadian Political Behaviour; and (d) add POLI 2610 - Introductory Research Methods as a recommended prerequisite for POLI 3280 - Canadian Political Behaviour and POLI 4610 - Scope and Methods.

The report posed the following questions for the External Reviewers:

- Given the limited resources, what should the department do with its M.A. program?
- What should be the department's hiring priorities?
- How can the department develop a more lively intellectual culture and a stronger sense of community?
- How can the department increase its enrolment?
- How can the department attract students who are not Political Science majors?

External Review

In their report, the External Reviewers noted several strengths of the department:

- The department's research output is impressive for such a small unit.
- Many faculty have strong national and international reputations in their areas of expertise.
- Faculty members are committed to the teaching mission of the U of L.
- The department attracts a large number of Political Science majors relative to its small size.
- Graduates are satisfied with the quality of instruction in the department.
- The department's programs and activities align closely with the U of L Strategic Plan.
- The curriculum is rigorous.

The report discussed the key weaknesses and threats for the department:

- The department is short on faculty resources. It does not have enough faculty to, for instance, offer a meaningful graduate program experience.
- There is a sense of isolation from cognate programs in Arts and Science, and a lack of a vibrant intellectual climate outside the classroom.
- The faculty acknowledges their lack of diversity.
- The department is ambivalent towards the M.A. program in Political Science, feeling that it does not have the resources to deliver a quality graduate experience.
- The curriculum includes little feminist or critical approaches.
- A department member will soon be retiring.
- There are no department-wide learning objectives.
- The present physical location of the department does not offer space that would help generate a sense of community for the unit.
- There are no regular department meetings.

The External Review Report contained 12 recommendations:

1. Investigate ways to enhance delivery of the M.A. program, including: increase cooperation with the U of C; study the feasibility of including on supervisory committees faculty members that are external to the U of L and U of C; and allow courses from other departments to be part of the M.A. program.
2. To attract more students from outside Political Science, design courses that are attractive and accessible for non-majors and consider relaxing prerequisites in some third-year courses.
3. Consider including one or more courses from cognate disciplines in the core requirements for the B.A.
4. As soon as is feasible, decide on a replacement for the retiring faculty member.
5. For a replacement for the retiring faculty member, advertise for a faculty member in sub-fields that will bring a diverse pool of candidates.
6. Ensure the Dean's office and the Department of Political Science meet to discuss and clarify the staffing situation in the department.
7. Review privacy legislation to ensure faculty conduct complies with provincial and national privacy standards.
8. Hold a departmental retreat in the 2014-15 academic year to identify learning objectives that can enhance curriculum design and ensure consistency in course offerings.
9. Ensure a community space for the department is included in the planning for the renovations of University Hall.
10. Request that the Dean of Arts and Science support travel by the department Chair to the annual Canadian Political Science Association Chairs meeting.
11. Use the David Elton Fund for financing activities that enhance the department's profile, reduce its sense of isolation, and strengthen intellectual exchanges that contribute to a sense of community within it.
12. Every year, hold at least two departmental meetings that include graduate and undergraduate student representation.

Program Response

In their response to the External Review Report, the Self Study Committee addressed the 12 recommendations made by the External Reviewers:

Recommendation:	Program Response:
1. Investigate ways to enhance delivery of the M.A. program, including: increase cooperation with the U of C; study the feasibility of including on supervisory committees faculty members that are external to the U of L and U of C; and allow courses from other departments to be part of the M.A. program.	The Department already cooperates with the U of C. External faculty on supervisory committees would likely not impact the workload of Political Science faculty. Some M.A. Political Science students do take courses from other departments, but this should be limited so that most courses for an M.A. in Political Science are within Political Science.
2. To attract more students from outside Political Science, design courses that are attractive and accessible for non-majors and consider relaxing prerequisites in some third-year courses.	Agreed. The Self Study Committee will encourage the Department to identify candidates for 3000-level service courses that have interdisciplinary appeal. Possible candidate courses include: Digital Politics; Film and International Relations; and Politics and Literature.
3. Consider including one or more courses from cognate disciplines in the core requirements for the B.A.	The Department should discuss this option, but there are obstacles. These include the lack of consensus on appropriate courses, and lack of reciprocity of other departments. Moreover, via the GLER, Political Science students are already exposed to different disciplines.
4. As soon as is feasible, decide on a replacement for the retiring faculty member.	Agreed. The Department should submit a staffing plan to the Dean of Arts and Science as soon as possible.
5. For a replacement for the retiring faculty member, advertise for a faculty member in sub-fields that will bring a diverse pool of candidates.	Agreed.
6. Ensure the Dean's office and the Department of Political Science meet to discuss and clarify the staffing situation in the department.	Agreed. The Department should ask the Dean to clarify the staffing situation as soon as possible.
7. Review privacy legislation to ensure faculty conduct complies with provincial and national privacy standards.	The Program Review Coordinator will investigate and report on this issue to the Department meeting and will remind all attendees of privacy obligations. The Self Study Committee will ask the Chair of the Department to email sessional lecturers to remind them of privacy obligations.

Recommendation:	Program Response:
8. Hold a departmental retreat in the 2014-15 academic year to identify learning objectives that can enhance department-wide curriculum design and ensure consistency in course offerings.	Agreed. The retreat should, however, be postponed until the 2015-16 academic year so the retiring faculty member's replacement can be involved.
9. Ensure a community space for the department is included in the planning for the renovations of University Hall.	Agreed. The Chair of the Department should advocate for this space as possible.
10. Request that the Dean of Arts and Science support travel by the department Chair to the annual Canadian Political Science Association Chairs meeting.	Agreed.
11. Use the David Elton Fund for financing activities that enhance the department's profile, reduce its sense of isolation, and strengthen intellectual exchanges that contribute to a sense of community within it.	Agreed.
12. Every year, hold at least two departmental meetings that include graduate and undergraduate student representation.	Agreed.

Dean's Response

In his response to the review findings, the Dean of Arts and Science noted that the department believes its small size and contributes significantly to the mission and vision of the University.

The Dean's Response addressed the recommendations generated by the review:

Recommendation:	Dean's Response:
1. Investigate ways to enhance delivery of the M.A. program, including: increase cooperation with the U of C; study the feasibility of including on supervisory committees faculty members that are external to the U of L and U of C; and allow courses from other departments to be part of the M.A. program.	At it's scheduled retreat, the department should discuss how and when to proceed with graduate programming. Where possible, faculty should participate in any new interdisciplinary M.A. programs that may be introduced.
2. To attract more students from outside Political Science, design courses that are attractive and accessible for non-majors and consider relaxing prerequisites in some third-year courses.	Agreed. Political Science courses may have an interdisciplinary appeal that fits well with Liberal Education. The department should participate in the development of the new cohort model for Liberal Education.
3. Consider including one or more courses from cognate disciplines in the core requirements for the B.A.	[Not addressed in the Dean's Response.]
4. As soon as is feasible, decide on a replacement for the retiring faculty member.	The salary line for Dr. McCormick's position was lost under budget restructuring, so ongoing funds for a replacement are not available. The Faculty/Department will have to make a case to the Provost for an additional position, in the context of the Arts and Science Academic Plan. An additional professor has become a part of the Department of Political Science, and will teach their first Political Science course in Spring 2015. A broader discussion on the right staffing complement for the department is needed.
5. For a replacement for the retiring faculty member, advertise for a faculty member in sub-fields that will bring a diverse pool of candidates.	
6. Ensure the Dean's office and the Department of Political Science meet to discuss and clarify the staffing situation in the department.	
7. Review privacy legislation to ensure faculty conduct complies with provincial and national privacy standards.	The department agreed with this; the Dean will follow up.
8. Hold a departmental retreat in the 2014-15 academic year to identify learning objectives that can enhance curriculum design and ensure consistency in course offerings.	Agreed.
9. Ensure a community space for the department is included in the planning for the renovations of University Hall.	UHall renovations will not start until 2019; commenting on space configurations is premature.

Recommendation:	Dean's Response:
10. Request that the Dean of Arts and Science support travel by the department Chair to the annual Canadian Political Science Association Chairs meeting.	Department faculty can access the Faculty of Arts and Science travel budget, which can support Chairs' travel to Chairs meetings.
11. Use the David Elton Fund for financing activities that enhance the department's profile, reduce its sense of isolation, and strengthen intellectual exchanges that contribute to a sense of community within it.	Agreed.
12. Every year, hold at least two departmental meetings that include graduate and undergraduate student representation.	Agreed.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Department of Political Science academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Robert A. Boudreau
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

Cc: Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice President (Academic)