



Senate Committee on University Planning

Academic Unit Review Summary: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Site Visit	October 17-18, 2017
Informal Response to Planning	January 15, 2018
Formal Response to Planning	March 26, 2018
Implementation Update	March 4, 2019
Midterm Review	2021-22

Review Team Members:

- Dr. Marc Doucett, Political Science, Dalhousie University (Chair, Review Team)
- Dr. Rachel Brickner, Political Science, Acadia University
- Dr. Frank Strain, Economics, Mount Allison University

Note: The following recommendations are taken verbatim from the external review. For context they should be read in conjunction with the department’s formal response, particularly with respect to recommendations.

Recommendations of the Academic Program Review

The recommendations that follow are based on the Review Team’s overall conclusion that the Department finds itself at an important juncture in terms of further consolidating the gains that stem from the program changes completed with the addition of the PPE program in 2013. With this in mind, the recommendations do not suggest a course change or even a course correction. Rather, the general spirit of the recommendations advises the Department to maintain the direction that it has taken and strengthen its capacity to deliver and support the POLS, INLR, and PPE programs.

Recommendations:

The Review Team supports the Department’s request for a tenure track hire in Comparative Politics to bring its permanent full-time faculty complement to six. This would allow the Department to fill program gaps and help consolidate over the medium and long term the gains of the program changes initiated since the last program review. Specifically, the addition of a sixth permanent faculty member would allow the Department to add course offerings in areas such as indigenous politics, gender, and/or law. Moreover, by adding another faculty member into the teaching rotation for POLS 1001, it would enable current faculty to offer courses not regularly taught. Finally, it would create an opportunity to address the flagrant lack of diversity among the Department’s current faculty.

The Review Team encourages the Department to consider ways to offer a course in Research Design and/or Research Methods. The absence of this course was noted in the 2009 program review. The Department’s response noted that it supported the 2009 Review Team’s recommendation that “The Faculty undertake to mount a faculty-wide course in research methods in the social sciences that would be useful to students from a range of programs in the Social Sciences”. The Review Team learned during interviews that action on this recommendation was not taken primarily because of the need to offer courses,

on regular rotation, to meet the requirements of POLS, INLR, and PPE. The Review Team recognizes this

challenge. Given the importance of, and student demand for, a Research Design or Research Methods course, we encourage the University to think creatively about how to fund such a course or courses at the Faculty level, perhaps through a Teaching Fellow.

The terms of reference for this review specify that the Review Team is asked to provide an assessment of the adequacy of the work space. During the space and campus tour, members of the Review Team were struck by the state of disrepair of certain classrooms in the Avarad Dixon building where most of the POLS and INLR courses are offered. The classrooms stood in stark contrast to other campus facilities such as the student center and the student dining hall. Some of the classrooms may indeed pose risks in terms of the health and safety of instructors and students. Audio visual wires, for instance, clearly posed a tripping hazard for students and faculty. During the focus group session, students reported that the classrooms were overcrowded and ill fitted as physical spaces for fostering a learning environment. Overcrowded classrooms may also pose a challenge with respect to issues of accessibility.