

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs
Conflict Studies and Human Rights

Faculty of Social Sciences

Cyclical review period: 2021–2022

Date: March 23, 2023

I. Program evaluated

- Honours Bachelor of Science (BSocSc) in Conflict Studies and Human Rights

II. Evaluation process (outline of the visit)

- This Final Assessment Report on the aforementioned program is based on the following documents: (a) the self-study report produced by the academic unit; (b) the report submitted by the external reviewers following their virtual visit; and (c) commentary on the aforementioned documents by Victoria Barham, Dean; Roland Paris, Director of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs; and Marie-Ève Desrosiers, in charge of the program review.
- The visit, which took place on November 8, 2022, was conducted by Anessa L. Kimball, Department of Political Science, Université Laval; and Christian Leuprecht, Department of Political Science and Economics, Royal Military College of Canada.
- The visit was conducted online. The reviewers received a copy of the comprehensive self-study report that was presented and discussed at the School Assembly prior to being amended.
- The reviewers met with the following groups and individuals: (1) Aline Germain-Rutherford, Vice-Provost, Academic Affairs; (2) Victoria Barham, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, and Hélène Pellerin, Vice-Dean, Undergraduate Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences; (3) Roland Paris, Director, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, and Marie-Ève Desrosiers, in charge of the program review; (4) full- and part-time professors; (5) students and representatives of the student association; and (6) administrative staff members.

III. Summary of reports on the quality of the program¹

IDENTIFICATION OF STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Strengths

- Excellence of faculty.
- Students say they are satisfied with their interactions with, and the availability of, teaching staff, and with the professors' expertise and their diverse skill sets. This contributes to the multidisciplinary nature of the program and the variety of courses offered.
- Relevance of the program to society, given the fundamental examination of human rights and conflict resolution.
- The University's geographic location gives students exceptional opportunities for internships, experiential learning, conferences and activities in the nation's capital.

¹ Based on the documents prepared during the review process and often quoted verbatim.

- Efforts are under way to diversify the curriculum so as to include non-colonial approaches. For example, a course on racism was introduced for students nearing graduation, and the School is planning to quickly implement a course on Indigenous policy, to enhance alignment with the University's decolonization strategy.

Challenges

- Although the assessment of the academic program shows good alignment of program learning outcomes (PLOs) in several courses, this does not appear to be the case systematically, with only minimal integration of PLOs in some courses. In addition, experiential learning, ethical considerations and non-colonial and quantitative method approaches are poorly integrated overall. Specifically:
 - Experiential learning: Many professors are actively engaged in research on topics that would facilitate experiential learning with governments and ECH stakeholders. The director of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and his team are working on experiential learning, e.g., co-op programs, study terms abroad, simulations and internships. This work is under way and has to continue.
 - Potential for updating the topics covered by the program regarding defence and security (e.g., no courses on military strategy, strategic analysis or the scientific study of conflicts and peace processes). A review of the curriculum also shows that there is little or no focus on negotiation theory, negotiation models or game theory, despite increasing interest in the subject and the body of literature on international relations and political science.

IV. Program improvements²

The program under review meets the standards of the discipline. The following recommendations seek to preserve and enhance the established level of quality of the program.

The numbering of the recommendations follows the numbering used in the external review report.

Recommendation 1: Maximize alignment between instructors and teaching assistants in terms of expertise and language skills.

Recommendation 2: Provide resources (including markers) to help Anglophone professors develop French-language versions of their courses and/or teach in French.

Recommendation 3: Consider co-teaching of compulsory introductory courses by Anglophone and Francophone professors in charge in order to ensure consistency of materials between courses.

Recommendation 4: An additional regular professor able to teach fourth-year courses in French might be needed, as those courses are taught by contract resources.

Recommendation 5: Institutionalize experiential learning in the curriculum through a dedicated program and/or targeted courses designed to assess learning throughout the program.

Recommendation 6: Continue to decolonize and diversify the curriculum, and add an upper-level elective on Indigenous peoples' rights and governance.

Recommendation 7: Generate learning outcomes for the four years of the program and the courses in each year in order to reduce overlap, ensure better alignment between theory and practice, and impart practical skills more systematically.

² Based on the external review report.

Recommendation 8: Incorporate a variety of experiential learning opportunities into the program, into the way in which courses are taught and into the enhancement and integration of student enrichment opportunities outside the classroom.

Recommendation 9: Ensure equitable outcomes in identical courses in both official languages through an analysis of student success data for all courses.

Recommendation 10: Adopt a much more systematic approach to ensure that members of the School teach in both official languages in the ECH program on a regular basis.

V. Conclusion

The Conflict Studies and Human Rights program is renowned for its interdisciplinary and innovative nature. Besides attracting undergraduate students, the program holds considerable appeal for the two target language groups at the University of Ottawa. In addition, students seem to especially like the regular professors in the program and their diverse expertise. That said, expectations and actual experience seem to be out of sync, hence some of the recommendations that were made.

Given this positive assessment, the Committee would like to thank everyone who was involved in the assessment of the program. The Committee would like to commend the academic unit on its diligent work and on the quality of the self-study report, as well as that of the report produced by the external review committee.

Schedule and timelines

A progress report is due by December 15, 2025. The next self-review cycle must take place within the next seven years, i.e., by 2028–2029. The self-study report must be submitted by June 15, 2028.

Unit Response and Action Plan

Faculty:

- Faculty of Social Sciences

Department:

- Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

Programs evaluated:

- Honours BSocSc in Conflict Studies and Human Rights

Cyclical review period:

- 2021-2022

Date:

- February 17, 2023

General comments:

On 11 January 2023, the Conflict Studies and Human Rights (ECH) program, run by the Graduate School in Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), was made aware of the External Review Report produced in the context of the cyclical program evaluation. We were very pleased with the positive evaluation of our undergraduate program. The ECH program is committed to providing an outstanding training experience to its students, and we were delighted to see this reflected in the external evaluators' report. The evaluators indicated that "[t]he impressive forces of this program are its relevance to society through foundational reflections upon rights and conflict resolution alongside the practical aspects of student learning and the excellence of the affiliated faculty". The report further stated that "ECH is a pretty unique and popular program of high quality taught by excellent instructors, and with students who by and large a pretty satisfied with their experience".

The external evaluators' report makes 10 recommendations, of which 7 are considered high priority or urgent. We take all the proposed recommendations seriously and have already begun addressing some of them. We present below our Action Plan to build on these 10 recommendations and further strengthen the ECH program.

Recommendation 1: Optimize for better fit between instructors and teaching assistants, in skillsets and language competency
<p>Unit response: Recommendations 1 through 4 pertain to ensuring that a good number of courses in the programme are offered in both in French and English, that their content and quality are equivalent in French and English course offerings, and that teaching in French be made more sustainable and less reliant on non-permanent Faculty. As indicated in our self-evaluation report, we share these concerns and take them seriously. We had, prior to the self-evaluation, begun undertaking some measures to address these issues.</p> <p>We are pleased to report that, in January 2023, GSPIA hired a new Francophone regular professor who will strengthen our French-language teaching capacity in ECH and make these courses less reliant on non-permanent faculty (see also recommendation 4).</p> <p>In addition, it is worth underscoring that we offer – and will continue to offer – all required ECH courses in both English and French every year.</p>
<p>Decanal response: I confirm that the new faculty member hired by GSPIA will significantly strengthen the capacity of the School to ensure that permanent faculty are contributing appropriately to the ECH program. I would also underscore the significant efforts that are being made by the Chair to ensure that the vast majority of GSPIA faculty teach <i>at least</i> one course at the undergraduate level, and this means that many more will be contributing to offering the ECH program, or will be teaching optional courses in other departments that are open to ECH students.</p>
Priority Level*: 1
<p>Actions to be undertaken: Identify TAs with the required methodological (qualitative and/or quantitative, if relevant) and linguistic skills for ECH courses.</p>
Assigned to: ECH teaching staff
Timeline: August 2023, December 2024, ahead of TA hires
Curriculum change? No
Priority Level: 1
<p>Actions to be undertaken: Match TAs to skills required by course, especially linguistically, and if relevant in terms of methodological training.</p>
Assigned to: GSPIA administrative personnel
Timeline: Ongoing as of August 2023
Curriculum change? No

* PRIORITY LEVEL: 1. URGENT-IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT-ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM)
3. ADVISED: DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY-ACTION TO BE DISCUSSED AND MUST BE IN PLACE BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN 4 YEARS)

Recommendation 2: Provide resources (including grading assistants) to support anglophone professors developing French versions of classes, and/or teaching in French
<p>Unit response: It should be noted that professors have access to linguistic training through the University of Ottawa’s Official Language and Bilingualism Institute.</p> <p>Providing Anglophone professors, in particular, with <i>additional</i> resources, such as grading assistants, may strengthen their capacity to develop and to deliver new French-language courses. The resources to do so, however, are beyond those available to the unit. This is a wider issue for the Faculty and the University.</p>
<p>Decanal response: The Dean supports the strategy identified by the School. The Dean suggests that professors slated to prepare new French-language classes might also consider offering a Directed Research course the preceding year, and actually involve two or three 4th year undergraduate francophone students in assisting them in developing course materials. This would be an incredibly valuable learning experience for the students, and would no doubt support the professor in developing innovative pedagogical materials.</p>
Priority Level*: 2
Actions to be undertaken: Explore the possibility of additional support for professors to develop and teach courses in their non-native language.
Assigned to: GPSIA director and ECH coordinator
Timeline: Fall 2023
Curriculum change? No

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Recommendation 3: Consider co-teaching by the francophone and anglophone responsible professors of the introduction obligatory courses to ensure a consistency of materials across courses
Unit response: See previous comment. As indicated above, the evaluators called for greater consistency across courses offered in French and English. We agree that ensuring Francophone and Anglophone cohorts have equivalent experiences in the program is essential. This is one of the reasons work has begun at GPSIA to ensure all teaching staff who have the subject-matter expertise to contribute to the ECH program do so on a regular basis.
Decanal response: It is worth noting that the Faculty's investment in DeepL Pro is a game-changer in terms of strengthening the capacity of faculty members to provide access to texts <i>in French</i> that are currently only available in English (and of texts <i>in English</i> that are currently only available in French). This allows us to truly leverage our bilingual, bicultural character, and makes co-teaching of introductory courses a much less daunting prospect to faculty members who are not absolutely comfortable in both languages.
Priority Level*: 1
Actions to be undertaken: Identify all teaching personnel able to contribute to ECH and identify possible courses they can teach.
Assigned to: GSPIA director, GPSIA administrative coordinator, ECH coordinator
Timeline: Fall 2023
Curriculum change? No
Priority Level: 1
Actions to be undertaken: Foster coordination between professors teaching the same course in French and English in First and Second years during syllabus development to ensure consistency across teaching.
Assigned to: ECH coordinator
Timeline: Fall 2023-Winter 2024
Curriculum change? No

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Recommendation 4: An additional regular professor capable to teach fourth year courses in French may be necessary as those courses are taught by contract faculty
<p>Unit response: We hired a new regular professor in January 2023, able to teach in French and specialising in Human Rights (HR). Not only will this ensure that a greater number of courses are offered in French by <i>regular</i> professors. The new professor will also be able to cover HR components of the program, as well as topics of growing importance, such as environmental law as well as issues surrounding new technologies.</p> <p>GSPIA has also recently secured a Long Term Appointment (LTA) for five years, which should also ensure greater stability of French-language teaching over the coming years.</p>
<p>Decanal response: The Dean supports the strategy envisaged by the School. The Dean notes that the Institute for the Environment, a sub-unit of GPSIA, may also be able to assist to some degree with the environmental law needs.</p>
Priority Level*: Already addressed
Actions to be undertaken: This recommendation has been addressed.
Assigned to: N/A
Timeline: N/A
Curriculum change? N/A

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Recommendation 5: Institutionalize experiential learning in curriculum through a dedicated program and/or learning evaluations targeted courses across all years of the program
<p>Unit response: Expanding the range of experiential learning opportunities is a goal shared by the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) and GSPIA. Currently, FSS is working collaboratively with its units to increase their experiential options. One member of the ECH core Faculty has been attending FSS meetings on experiential learning.</p> <p>That said, many ECH course instructors have, over the years, integrated experiential learning components into their courses. These ongoing efforts signal a keen interest in the program in offering this type of experience to its students. We therefore agree with this recommendation and intend to expand experiential learning opportunities in ECH, ideally across all years of the program, to offer students learning opportunities beyond the classroom at all levels.</p> <p>We are pleased to report that, in February 2023, GSPIA designated a colleague who will be responsible on an ongoing basis for leading our work on experiential learning, and who will liaise with FSS and others.</p>
Decanal response: The Faculty, in collaboration with the Vice-Provost, Academic Affairs, is actively engaged in developing High-Intensity Experiential Learning Pathways, and it very much hopes that ECH will be one of the first programs to offer such a pathway. This would, we believe, truly distinguish our ECH program from ECH-adjacent programs offered at other universities, both francophone and anglophone.
Priority Level*: 1
Actions to be undertaken: Identify all experiential learning opportunities currently offered in ECH and share across teaching faculty.
Assigned to: ECH programme committee, GSPIA professional development coordinator
Timeline: Fall 2024
Curriculum change? No
Priority Level: 1
Actions to be undertaken: Approach and support ECH teaching staff to develop new, durable experiential learning opportunities, such as a possible field research course, redevelop a ‘model UN’ course, etc.
Assigned to: ECH programme committee, GSPIA professional development coordinator
Timeline: Winter 2024
Curriculum change? No

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Recommendation 6: Continue decolonializing and diversifying the curricula; Integrate an optional upper-level course on Indigenous rights and governance
<p>Unit response: The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa has in recent years invested significant effort and resources to address the decolonization of its curricula across units. Part of these efforts have revolved around hiring two First Nations curriculum specialists to support the development of unit specific decolonization strategies.</p> <p>Prior to the evaluators' visit, and as part of FSS' efforts, GSPIA completed an Indigenization and Decolonization strategy whose implementation will be overseen by a professor designated as GSPIA's Indigenization and Decolonization lead. As part of this effort, the ECH coordinator and ECH program committee had begun reflecting on how to implement decolonization initiatives adapted to the Conflict and Human Rights program. We have already created of a second-year course entitled Indigenous Politics and Human Rights. In addition, we have been adding other departments' courses on Indigenous questions to the elective courses available to ECH students. For example, we recently added one Anthropology course and one Indigenous Studies course. We will also advance these initiatives by also exploring ways to include relevant decolonization components in ECH courses, when applicable. Some ECH professors have already begun doing this.</p>
<p>Decanal response: The Dean is truly delighted by the recent approval of GSPIA's Indigenization and Decolonization strategy, and believes that it will enable the School to make very significant progress towards this crucial goal. Other departments, including the School of Political Studies, are also adding courses that would possibly be relevant to ECH students, and I am confident that GPSIA will ensure that all such courses are available to their students. I encourage the School to move to make a minimum of 3.0 credits a mandatory element of the ECH program once it judges that this is feasible.</p>
Priority Level*: 1
Actions to be undertaken: Integrate a course on Indigenous Rights, in both English and French
Assigned to: ECH coordinator, ECH teaching staff
Timeline: The course already exists and is offered in English. We hope eventually to offer it in French.
Curriculum change? No
Priority Level: 2
Actions to be undertaken: Hold discussions with ECH teaching staff, ECH program committee, and FSS curriculum specialists to explore integrating additional decolonial/decolonization components into ECH courses.
Assigned to: GPSIA decolonization representative, ECH teaching staff, ECH program committee.
Timeline: Fall 2023
Curriculum change? No

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Recommendation 7: Generate systematic PLOs across the four years of the program and courses within each year to reduce overlap, better connect theory with practice, and impart practical skillsets more systematically
<p>Unit response: As part of the self-evaluation process in ECH, the program’s PLOs were thoroughly revised, in collaboration with ECH teaching staff and university learning advisors. The new PLOs specifically aim to better connect theory taught in ECH to applied knowledge, as well as to practice and experiential forms of learning.</p> <p>The next steps are to ensure that these PLOs are mobilised by ECH teaching staff and integrated to their syllabus and course development.</p>
Decanal response: The Dean fully supports the strategy proposed by the School.
Priority Level*: 1
Actions to be undertaken: Familiarise all teaching personnel ECH learning outcomes and begin reflecting them in course syllabi.
Assigned to: Teaching staff, ECH coordinator
Timeline: Winter 2024
Curriculum change? No

Recommendation 8: Incorporate diverse and experiential learning opportunities into the program, in the way courses are taught and in enhancing and integrating opportunities for student enrichment outside of the classroom
<p>Unit response: See Recommendation 5, which already pertains to diversifying and systematising experiential learning in the program.</p>
Decanal response: See response to Recommendation 5.

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Recommendation 9: Assure equitable outcomes across identical courses in both official languages through data-based analysis of student success rates across courses
<p>Unit response: The evaluators suggested that a more systematic assessment of possible discrepancies in how courses are offered to Francophone and Anglophone cohorts be performed. This assessment would build on historical data pertaining to students' success rates.</p> <p>One member of the ECH core faculty has agreed to examine existing data and, if need be, to continue surveying students over the coming years.</p>
Decanal response: I encourage the faculty member(s) involved in this project to create a Directed Research course to support them in undertaking this analysis.
Priority Level*: 3
Actions to be undertaken: Gather and analyse existing data to perform on assessment of variation between Francophone and Anglophone streams in the program.
Assigned to: ECH program committee
Timeline: Fall 2025
Curriculum change? No

Recommendation 10: Take a much more systematic approach to regular GSPIA professors teaching consistently in ECH, and to do so in both official language
<p>Unit response: Recommendations 1 to 4 already address systematising teaching in ECH by regular professors and in both official languages.</p>
Decanal response: I am convinced that the Director of GSPIA is making every possible effort to ensure participation of regular faculty in ECH courses. Moreover, I am happy to support the involvement of regular faculty from outside GSPIA, where appropriate.

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