Executive Summary

Graduate Program in Political Science
Cyclical Review 2014-2015

Prepared by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Meeting of November 11, 2015

Name of Program Reviewed | Political Science
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Degrees
- Master of Arts in Political Science
- Master of Arts in Political Science with Specialization in Women's Studies
- Master of Arts in Political Science with Specialization in Environmental Sustainability
- Doctorate in Philosophy, Political Science
- Doctorate in Philosophy, Political Science with Specialization in Canadian Studies

Academic Unit | School of Political Studies

Fields of Specialization
- Relations internationales / International Relations
- Politique canadienne et québécoise / Canadian and Quebec Politics
- Pensée politique et analyse des idéologies / Political Thought and Analysis of Ideologies
- Politique comparée / Comparative Politics

Final Evaluation | Good quality

**Strengths of the Program**

Overall, the masters (MA) and doctoral (PhD) programs in political science were considered to be well designed and at the proper level. The quantity and quality of publications produced by the students, along with their success in obtaining grants from research councils and the government, are indicative of the dynamic and impressive research conducted at the School.

The School of Political Studies attracts many students and is recruiting increasingly competitive candidates– a situation that is directly related to growth and development of the School’s professorial corps, which collectively provides a very high quality of support in a wide range of research areas.

The School abolished its cross-cutting themes in 2014 and now retains only four fields of specialization. This has made the programs more coherent for students, and easier to understand for partners or employers outside the University of Ottawa.

**Areas for Improvement**

In order to create a more enriching and diverse academic atmosphere, the School of Political Studies could seek to recruit more international students, especially at the doctoral level. In addition, such a
strategy would increase the visibility of the program.

Both the MA and the PhD program could benefit from a re-evaluation of the content of their mandatory courses, namely the “Methods” courses (i.e., POL 6101/6501 and POL 7366/7766). These courses are currently designed as preparation for the writing of a thesis, rather than as courses in methodology, per se.

The graduation rate and the average time-to-completion of these programs were identified as areas for improvement. In both the masters’ and doctoral programs, a significant number of students do not graduate or require an extension to graduate. At the MA level, one potential solution could be to encourage more students to opt for the research project rather than the thesis, a strategy that is well established in comparable Canadian programs. At the doctoral level, one partial solution could be to improve the distribution of supervision duties among the faculty’s professors to ensure that each professor can supervise their students more closely.

**Recommendations**

1. Pay close attention to MA and PhD time-to-completion and graduation rates, and develop solutions to improve them.
2. Re-evaluate the content of the mandatory “methods” courses to ensure that students receive proper training in methodology.
3. Design a strategy to recruit more foreign students.

**Implementation plan**

**Calendar and deadlines**
All three recommendations should be addressed before the next cyclical evaluation in 2022–2023.

**Authorities**
Those responsible for implementing the recommendations, and following up on them, are the Dean and Vice-Dean, Graduate Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Director of the School of Political Studies as well as those responsible for the graduate programs in political science (MA and PhD).