

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

### **PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE**

**Faculty of Arts**

#### **A) PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW – POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE**

##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Politics and Governance program was launched in 2005. Ten years later, the program is thriving. Since 2005, over 300 students have graduated and the number of students applying to the program and being admitted annually continues to increase.

The POG program was founded on the belief that there was a need and demand for a program that offered students an opportunity to critically examine and understand the political, social, and economic forces that influence and shape domestic through to global affairs. Hence, the decision to label the program ‘politics and governance’ rests on the recognition that politics, policy and political outcomes are a function of multiple interests and forces in society and that students need to understand politics as a function of those relations and interactions. The Department aimed to instill these learning objectives through a comprehensive curriculum structure and suite of course offerings. This means that all students graduating from the program will be exposed to all major sub-disciplines in the study of politics, while also being required to take courses relating to social identity, citizenship, and the non-profit sector. These requirements are more extensive than many other programs in Ontario. There are strengths and challenges with this structure. These requirements mean that students are exposed to the rich diversity and quality of teaching in the Department, as well as core components of a diverse discipline. This builds on the high quality of teaching in the Department. At the same time, the curriculum structure, along with the ongoing concerns about class sizes and student enrolments, means that the Department does not yet offer the range of courses that it desires. Hence, in the years to come, the Department faces an exciting opportunity: continue to build and invigorate a program that is well liked by students and that continues to attract good quality and high numbers of applicants, while simultaneously responding to Department and student desires to refresh the program to respond to changing internal and external demands and pressures.

In the short and medium term, the Department has several priorities. Some high priorities include: 1) reviewing and reinvigorating the curriculum, particularly to re-establish a clear progression in the upper years of the program; 2) examine ways that the Department can offer more opportunities for faculty to bring their unique research and teaching expertise to upper level program students; 3) establish an alumni outreach and engagement strategy; and 4) review student learning opportunities outside of the classroom, whether through placements or enhanced community engaged learning.

The Department of Politics and Public Administration celebrates the Politics and Governance program. It is enthused by the opportunity to critically reflect on the program and work with students and alumni in the coming years to continue to build and foster a diverse, positive, critical and engaged learning environment for Politics and Governance students.

##### **FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (FAR)**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate Politics and Governance program. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies the recommendations; who will be responsible for leading the implementation of the recommendations; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

## **1) SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAM**

The Politics and Governance program submitted a self study report to the Vice Provost Academic on March 30, 2016. The self study presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, and program data including the data collected from a student survey along with the standard University Planning data tables. Appended were the course outlines for all core required and elective courses in the program and the CVs for each full-time faculty member.

Two external arm's-length external reviewers (Dr. Joseph Wong, Ralph and Roz Halbert Professor of Innovation, Professor, CRC, Political Science & Associate Vice-President and Vice-Provost, International Student Experience, University of Toronto; and Dr. Joanna Everitt, Professor of Political Science, and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John) were appointed by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts from a set of proposed reviewers. They reviewed the self study documentation and then conducted a site visit to Ryerson University on January 20, 2017.

The visit included meetings with the Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic; Interim Vice Provost Academic; Dean, Faculty of Arts;; Associate Dean, Students and Undergraduate studies; Chair, Politics and Governance; Interim Undergraduate Program Director; and the Program Assistant. The PRT also met with several members of the Department including staff, students, and ten (10) POG faculty members. A general tour of the campus was provided by the program Chair en route to meet with the Chief Librarian and staff in the Library.

In their report (March, 2017), the Peer Review Team (PRT) provided feedback that describes how the Politics and Governance program meets the IQAP evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities.

The PRT noted that because the Department of Politics and Public Administration also supports a BA in Public Administration and has a tradition of focusing on municipal or urban politics, the department has particular strengths in the subfields of Canadian politics and public governance, but somewhat weaker offerings in comparative politics, international relations, and political theory. As a large and major department within the Faculty of Arts, the Department of Politics and Public Administration designed the POG program to reflect the "Ryerson style" of liberal arts education: blending theory with community engaged learning and the development of career-oriented skills and opportunities.

Student responses, both in the information included in the self-evaluation and in the PRT meeting with students during the site visit, make it clear they believe the department is providing them with positive academic experiences. This occurs through direct participation in their courses; simulations in the classroom; novel on-line teaching tools; experiential learning opportunities; the POG 499 'Field Experience' course; and the CPOG 490 'Special Topics Course' that enables them to travel to Washington or the CPOG 417 'Canadian-American Relations' course that collaborates with Penn State faculty and students.

The PRT noted that while the department is hampered by limited access to teaching assistants in its larger introductory courses and the time it takes to prepare and promote experiential learning opportunities, some faculty members clearly make an effort to use non-traditional learning strategies in their classes.

The Chair of the Politics and Governance program submitted a response to the PRT Report on April 27, 2017. The response to both the PRT Report and the Program's Response was submitted by the Dean of Arts on February 5, 2018.

## **2) SUMMARY OF THE PEER REVIEW REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The Department should continue to enhance the experiential learning opportunities it provides for its students as a means of aligning itself with the university's academic plan and distinguishing itself from other competing Political Science programs in the area.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The Faculty and Department should provide adequate support and resources to enable faculty members to explore initiatives that provide students with opportunities for experiential learning and community engagement. This might come in the form of an "experiential learning coordinator" position within the department, lower caps on "experiential learning/community engagement courses" or course reductions for faculty members who take on these courses or those who incorporate new pedagogical approaches in their courses (new educational technology, webinars, podcasts etc.).

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The Department should explore how experiential learning and community engagement opportunities can be built into and enhanced in all streams in the program, and not just those that focus on Canadian politics or public administration.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** The Department should consider the development of new courses (similar to the POG 499 or CPOG 490 courses) that would provide students with internship opportunities with or exposure to other institutions/organizations that would benefit from employees with a POG background.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** The Department should examine the POG curriculum and consider its redesign to reflect the greater diversity in the teaching and research expertise currently found among the faculty. However, it should do so keeping in mind the research focuses and pedagogical principles that make the Politics and Governance program distinctive from a more traditional Political Science degree program.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** The POG program should continue to emphasize its strengths in the department's community service ethos (i.e. courses in non-profits, citizenship, experiential learning etc.) that align with the University's academic plan and distinguishes the program from other Political Science programs, while considering ways that it can broaden and diversify its course offerings within the discipline.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** The Department should consider reducing the number of required courses in years 1 and 2. This could be done in a number of ways including: collapsing the introductory courses into one or two courses; reducing the Canadian politics sequence from 2 courses to 1 course; requiring a student to take four of the five subfields rather than all five; or collapsing the Comparative Politics and Global Governance fields.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** The Department should put more emphasis on department-wide curricular planning that opens up possibilities for linkages between courses across various subfields (for example, the possibility of more international and/or comparative course offerings in the Canadian and Public Policy fields such as courses in comparative federalism, the political economy of North America, or Canada's place in the international community).

**RECOMMENDATION 9:** The Department should consider allowing faculty to create new courses that they could offer on a rotational basis, such that the newly created courses do not necessarily mean the elimination of a previous course.

**RECOMMENDATION 10 -** The POG program should reduce the number of required 400-level courses from 5 to 3 (or even 2). Students could then take more courses at the 300 level, which would be more appropriate as larger class lecture style courses. Reducing the number of required course would reduce the pressure on the 400 level-courses and make it possible to impose caps and create real seminar opportunities.

**RECOMMENDATION 11 –** The Department should aim to reduce the class sizes for all 4th year courses (i.e. cap courses at 40 students) and designate specific 4th year courses as seminars (reading and research intensive), capped at 20-25 students. The department should work closely with the Provost and Faculty of Arts to ensure sufficient resources are available to do this.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** The Department may wish to consider adding additional 300- or 400-level electives in the fields of methods or theory for those students who wish to pursue these fields in more depth.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** The Department should consider exploring the establishment of double major programs (with cognate departments) which entail fewer core and elective POG courses.

**RECOMMENDATION 14:** The Dean's office should make greater effort to inform the department at an earlier date about the number of Graduate Assistantships available for 100 and 200 level classes.

**RECOMMENDATION 15:** The Department should identify a number of its 400-level courses as seminar courses so that students are provided the opportunity to engage in small class discussions in a seminar style format.

**RECOMMENDATION 16:** The Department should provide more opportunities to offer courses in comparative or global politics within the POG program, particularly if those courses exploit the program's focus on "political governance," and not just a traditional "political science," and/or they engage students in both service and experiential learning. This could be done by emphasizing topics that support the internationalization of the campus and the city and provide opportunities for students to learn in meaningful and experiential ways, as conveyed to us by the Provost.

**RECOMMENDATION 17:** The Department should explore the possibility of counting upper level POL or Public Admin courses towards a POG degree so as to provide students with more flexibility in their course options. (Program note: this is currently done)

**RECOMMENDATION 18:** The Faculty of Arts should give serious consideration to the suggestions from the Department of Politics and Public Administration to help streamline the GA and Marker systems found on page 68 of their self-evaluation.

### **3) PROGRAM RESPONSE TO THE PRT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

In April 2017, the Department of Politics and Public Administration met to consider the recommendations from the Program Review Team (PRT). It revised, and voted to endorse, the a revised Development Plan, taking into consideration the recommendations provided by the external reviewers. These priorities are viewed as consistent with the Ryerson Academic Plan, and the general direction and

goals of the Faculty of Arts. Further, these priorities are reflective of the successes and challenges the Department has experienced over the past ten years it has been delivering this program. The priorities are presented in relation to the expediency in which they need to be started or undertaken: immediate (next 1-2 years); medium-term (2-4 years); longer-term (4-6 years).

Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Department of Politics and Public Administration

Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean

### **Immediate Priorities (1-2 years)**

- The Department will review and examine the POG curriculum (its total package of course offerings) to consider how best to reflect the diversity and interests of the student body, the teaching and research expertise of current and future faculty members, the subfields in the POG curriculum, and in consideration of the specific recommendations of the external reviewers. **PRT Recommendation 5, 9, 10, 12, 16**
- The Department will examine carefully its required courses and the number of required courses. The goal will be to examine opportunities to clarify and reinforce the relationship between lower and upper level courses, the balance between sub- fields, to expand student choice, and to meet Faculty and university goals. The Department will examine mechanisms for Department-wide curriculum planning, particularly the role of the Curriculum Committee and how it engages with students, faculty and sub-fields. **PRT Recommendation 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 16**
- The Department is committed to ensuring that students have the opportunity to participate in seminar courses with no more than 25 students. The Department will determine ways that courses can be clearly identified as seminar courses, and once identified, that these can be rotated between interested faculty members and between different sub-fields, while maintaining enrolment in non-seminar courses. The goal of this exercise will be to explore the relationship within the curriculum between lower and upper level courses, and to provide opportunity for students to have an advanced learning experience in which they are better exposed to faculty expertise. **PRT Recommendation 11, 15**
- The Department will examine the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action* directly relevant to post-secondary institutions, and consider carefully their connection to the POG curriculum, to indigenous student support and recruitment, and to faculty recruitment and support. The Department has a strong desire to gain more certainty and clarity about how Graduate Assistants (GAs) will be allocated in future, particularly if there is an expectation that the Department should teach more students and larger classes. To allow for better course planning, the Department needs to develop, with the Dean's office, a clear plan for the allocation of GA and marking assistance and for the training of GAs. **PRT Recommendation 14, 18**

- In light of recent and expected retirements, the Department will consider how new faculty hires could assist in recruiting new undergraduate and graduate students and help the program differentiate itself from other politics programs in the GTA. **PRT Recommendation 1, 5**
- The Department has a strong record of using non-traditional learning (community engaged or experiential learning) in teaching. However, it does not have a formal strategy or plan for how or when students will encounter 'experiential learning' in the curriculum, with the exception of one elective course at the 400 level, POG 499. The Department will examine whether it is feasible to embed experiential learning opportunities more formally in the curriculum generally, and in each sub- field specifically, so students can associate specific courses with these forms of learning and so they can anticipate when those opportunities will arise. Formally increasing the number of courses with community engaged learning opportunities, and frequency of these opportunities, will be contingent on: the curriculum review process; maintaining existing support for experiential activities; increasing support for students; and increasing support and resources for faculty and Departmental staff that will support and/or expand these initiatives. **PRT Recommendation 1, 2, 3, 4, 6**

#### **Medium-Term Priorities (2-4 years)**

- Several Departments in the Faculty of Arts have recently submitted a proposal for Double Majors. The Department will discuss which Arts programs might be most suitable for a student in POG to pursue a double major and discuss which 13 courses would be listed as 'required' for a major in *Politics and Governance*. The Department will also review whether to formally establish concentrations within the POG curriculum. **PRT Recommendation 6, 13**
- Working with the Undergraduate Recruitment office, the Department will document past, present and potential future recruitment strategies, particularly in the GTA. The Department will try to build on the popularity of the program within the City of Toronto and GTA and develop a strong recruitment and promotion strategy for the GTA, building on all of the strengths of the department relative to other competitors: city/urban-focused; policy; public administration; global and Canadian specialists; comparative; non-profit; indigenous. **PRT Recommendation: 1, 5**

#### **Longer-Term Priorities (4-6 years)**

- Working with the Faculty of Arts Student Experience Team, and Ryerson International, the Department will try to develop a way of regularly evaluating collaborative and international exchanges and opportunities that exist and that may be developed. To date, evaluation is largely done informally (e.g., by speaking with students after their exchange opportunity). Given that students have a desire to pursue international exchanges, but deem the real or perceived financial burden to be prohibitive, the Department will explore opportunities for funding to support student international exchanges. The Department will consider expanding opportunities

for students to undertake exchanges with other Canadian universities, and formalize existing agreements. **PRT Recommendation 3, 16**

#### **4) ADDITIONAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS IN REVISED SELF STUDY**

Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Department of Politics and Public Administration

Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean

##### **Immediate Priorities (1-2 years)**

- i. The Department will promote more prominently our Minors (Politics, Global Politics and Development) that are underpinned by POG courses.
- ii. The Department will promote more consistently the accomplishments of students, faculty and staff on the Department website.
- iii. The Department will endeavour to produce a plan for how it will rotate core elective courses in a way that reinforces faculty expertise and student choice, and will aim to share that plan with students, ideally, advertising it in advance of the course intentions period.
- iv. The Department will work with the Dean's office to establish and confirm a multi- year course-offering plan that includes approximate class sizes. In years past, faculty have sometimes learned of changes in class size just prior to the commencement of classes, thus challenging the proposed delivery and structure of courses. Confirming a course offering plan and the size of classes to be delivered will support better planning and teaching quality.

##### **Medium-Term Priorities (2-4 years)**

- i. The Department will examine further opportunities for POG students to enroll in public administration courses (PPA) without undermining enrolment in POG electives. POG students are currently permitted to enroll in PPA courses with the consent of the Undergraduate Program Director. POG students have an interest in more courses in the policy and administration areas and it would be a benefit to the PAG program to increase enrolment in some of these courses too, if possible. Generally, the Department will also consider ways to connect the POG program and Public Administration and Governance program students.
- ii. The Department will develop an alumni strategy for the POG program. The Department has had preliminary discussions with Ryerson Alumni Affairs and has consulted with other Departments in the Faculty of Arts. What it chooses to do and can do will be contingent on resources, including staff and faculty time, and on the range of technological options available to maintain a sustained alumni network.

- iii. The Department delivers many highly enrolled Liberal Studies courses, almost entirely to non-Politics and Governance students. Working with the Dean's office, the Department will clarify the expectations for Liberal Studies delivered by our Department (how many, how frequently, and class size goals). The Department will also review the complement of Liberal Studies currently offered, to determine whether to increase or decrease the total number of courses offered, given other opportunities, challenges and expectations. This issue is important to discuss and important for the POG program because: a) the number of Liberal Studies courses the Department is expected to teach will affect how many faculty members are available to teach required and elective POG courses; and b) POG students can, with Department consent, direct upper level Liberal Studies politics (POL) courses to their Table 2 requirements (core electives) at the 300-level. While this option is not promoted, which upper level Liberal Studies courses the Department offers can and does affect the POG curriculum.

#### **Longer-Term Priorities (4-6 years)**

- i. The Department will investigate the feasibility and implications of increasing the number of professional electives offered in spring/summer or the number of Upper Level POL courses, recognizing that any increase in courses offered in spring/summer will decrease the number of students taking courses in the fall/winter.
- ii. The Department will stay abreast of developments in online learning and continuing education, keeping in mind the potential benefits and tradeoffs of alternative course delivery and revenue generation.
- iii. The Department will examine new ways to assist students interested in post-graduate studies and careers relating to their degree, including strategies for working with the Career Centre.

#### **5) DEAN'S RESPONSE TO PRT AND PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

In general, the developmental plan offers a feasible set of actions for strengthening the academic rigour and relevance of the program as well as raising the profile of the department. Many of the recommendations do have resource implications, which will have to be considered carefully by the Faculty of Arts, given the usual constraints of limited funding allocations from other levels of administration, collective agreement obligations and the implications of university-wide curricular structures. The major areas addressed in the PRT report, the self-study and the developmental plan are the following: curriculum development; experiential learning; Liberal Studies; resources to support curriculum delivery, including TA/GAs and full-time RFA hires; heightening of the departmental profile, in part with regard to enhancing student recruitment.

##### **Curriculum development:**

As its immediate priority, The Politics and Governance department is committed to a complete review of its curriculum, in particular, to ensure sound academic progression from first year to fourth year. The department would like to introduce senior seminars with a planned maximum of 25 students. Increased electivity will be ensured by greater rotation of courses and the establishment, with the Dean's office, of a long-term plan for course offerings. The Department of Politics and Governance has long collaborated with



the First Nations Technical Institute; ‘indigenization’ of the program’s curriculum is an important next step, in partial response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report and the Ryerson University TRC Community Consultation. In the long-term, the development of double majors, which has only recently begun in the Faculty of Arts, will increase the attractiveness of the program and offer possibilities for growth.

The PRT has offered several recommendations and suggestions regarding curricular development, especially with regard to a more streamlined first year, the breaking down of silos within the department and its subfields, a reduction in the number of introductory courses, and a reduction in the number of subfields offered to the students. The program department will need to weigh the effectiveness of these proposals in improving the curricular structure of the program while maintaining the structural integrity of the discipline.

#### Experiential learning:

The PRT commends the Politics and Governance program for the opportunities it offers for experiential learning and community engagement, citing for example, the field experience course, POG 499. The PRT and the department concur on the importance of experiential learning and its continued development and expansion, particularly beyond the courses that focus on Canadian politics and public administration. The PRT gives a number of suggestions to enhance initiatives in this area: the possible hiring of an experiential learning coordinator; lower caps on experiential learning courses; the development of internship programs; course reduction for faculty offering courses with innovative pedagogy. Obviously, these measures have resource implications and would require a careful cost-benefit analysis. It should be noted that the Faculty of Arts is currently establishing a working group on experiential learning in its diverse forms. Enhancement of the student experience is essential but there is no doubt that resources and limited economies of scale may be an issue for departments pursuing these initiatives independently. In addition, the Faculty of Arts must address matters such as course releases in an equitable manner across all programs.

#### Liberal Studies:

The Department of Politics and Governance would like to work with the Dean of Arts office to clarify the nature and extent of the department’s role in offering Liberal Studies courses to students across the university. The department notes that advanced POL Liberal Studies courses may also be made available by departmental consent to students in the Politics and Governance program as professional electives at the 300 level. The department is concerned that with a limited number of faculty available to meet the demands of undergraduate and graduate level teaching, resources must be stretched to include Liberal Studies courses. I would point out that many of these courses are taught in the Faculty of Arts by contract lecturers rather than Ryerson Faculty Association tenure-track members and that the cost of Liberal Studies teaching is not borne directly by the department. Liberal Studies play an important service role in providing to students across the university breadth, writing skills and a critical awareness of the world in which they engage as citizens. Enrolments from outside the Faculty of Arts also facilitate the financing of our academic programs and their initiatives. Finally, it should be noted that the recent negotiations that allowed the Department of Politics and Governance to reduce the RFA workload from 2+3 to 2+2 included a commitment to maintain current teaching loads, including Liberal Studies, and this must be respected going forward.

#### Resources – faculty, staff and TA/GA/invigilators:

Both the PRT and the department attach great significance to improving the hiring and training of TA/GAs, a matter of importance for both undergraduate and graduate students. The Faculty of Arts is always pleased to streamline processes wherever possible. Currently, departments may submit their requests for TA/GAs as early as July for the Fall session and October for the Winter session. We can examine whether or not it is possible to move these dates forward but much depends as well on timely submission by the departments. The Dean of Arts Office places a high value on the use of Teaching and Graduate Assistants, as these

positions improve both the graduate and the undergraduate experience. This calendar year, we increased the funding for TA/GAs with the intent that departments will decide for themselves where the money would best be spent. We are convinced that this will improve the teaching and learning environment.

#### Full-time RFA hires:

The Politics and Governance PPR indicates that in order to achieve its academic goals of diversifying its curriculum and its teaching complement as well as improving the student experience, it will require additional RFA members. The department points out that given the number of faculty that are seconded, on reduced workload or approaching retirement, new hires will be necessary. Fortunately, the current Provost Dr. Michael Benarroch has indicated that hiring more faculty members is a priority university-wide. Like other departments, the Department of Politics and Governance has the opportunity to request new positions; however, it will be important to demonstrate the need for new positions in relation to curricular initiatives, new and old, as well as overall student enrolments, including Liberal Studies, in addition to the overall health of the department.

#### Raising the profile of the program and the department:

The department envisages a number of measures designed to raise the profile of the program: a focus on student recruitment highlighting the unique advantages of the Politics and Governance program in the GTHA; promotion of its minors; greater engagement with alumni, increased opportunities for international exchanges and engagement; continued strength in SRC; promotion of the accomplishments of students, staff and faculty. The Dean of Arts Office certainly concurs with the judgment of the PRT: “In general we feel that the Politics and Governance Program and Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson is a strong department, with dedicated teachers and scholars clearly committed to their students.” (PRT, 12) I look forward to seeing the program become even stronger and more distinctive as it differentiates itself from similar programs in the GTHA through the initiatives outlined in its developmental plan.

#### Conclusion:

The department has carefully characterized its goals over the immediate, short and long-term in a manner that seems feasible. The most urgent matter is the review of curriculum, which the department is eager to pursue as quickly as possible. Given the recent changes in the tripartite curriculum at the university-wide level, all departments will be obliged to review their curriculum structure, so this review is very timely.

The program department’s developmental plan is consistent with the Faculty of Arts Academic Plan (2014-2019) with its emphasis on academic excellence, innovation and experiential learning. The Dean of Arts office is willing to work with the department to address the recommendations set out in the PPR, the PRT report and the revised self-study, while taking into account the constraints placed upon us by the collective agreements in place at Ryerson University as well as resource allocation decisions made by the senior administration.

Date of next Periodic Program Review  
2025 - 2026