



**FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**  
**Executive Summary**  
**November 8, 2019**  
**Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Political Science**  
**Program Review**  
**Dean: Dr. Peter Stoett**

Under Ontario Tech University's Quality Assurance Framework, all degree programs are subject to a comprehensive review every eight years to ensure that they continue to meet provincial quality assurance requirements and to support their ongoing rigour and coherence.

On the completion of the program review, the self-study brief together with the reviewers' report and the assessment team's response are reviewed by the appropriate standing committee of Academic Council, and are subsequently reported to Academic Council, the Board of Governors and the Quality Council.

In academic years 2017 - 2019 a program review was scheduled for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Political Science program. This is the first program review for this program and the internal assessment team is to be commended for undertaking this assignment in addition to an already challenging workload and within a very tight timeline. The following pages provide a summary of the outcomes and action plans resulting from the review, identifying the strengths of the program as well as the opportunities for program improvement and enhancement. A report from the program outlining the progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations will also be put forward in eighteen months' time.

**External Reviewers:** Dr. Nadine Changfoot – Trent University, Dr. Otto Sanchez - Ontario Tech University  
**Site Visit:** April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### **Program Overview**

Students begin the interdisciplinary Political Science program with the Faculty-wide common first year, which includes introductory courses in community development, communication, psychology, legal studies or criminology, political science, and sociology.

The program's courses are both intellectually challenging and practically-oriented. After the first year, Political Science students can choose to pursue a Comprehensive program or can choose a specialization that focuses on Political Communication (incorporating Communication and Digital Media Studies perspectives) or one that focuses on Social Justice, Globalization and Development (incorporating legal

and criminological perspectives). The program is designed to allow students to delve deeply into current issues and policies in communities in Canada and around the world.

### **Significant Strengths of the Program**

- The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities (FSSH) promotes social justice, the education of its students to become leaders in local and global communities, and collegiality that values anti-oppression, collective responsibility, innovation, and professional development.
- The strong research profile of the faculty and its solid partnerships with community organizations assures that this program offers dynamic learning environments, engages students to solve problems, promote social innovation, enhance the university at home and abroad. In addition, the program promote social engagement, foster critical thinking and integrate experiences inside and outside of the classroom.
- The program, despite its small size, is a clear and important contributor to high quality research, the development of academic and research collaborations with the City of Oshawa and regional community organizations.
- The Political Science program faculty provide applied experiential experiences with the City Idea Lab and the Oshawa Teaching City initiative, which work to provide all of its students with applied experiential learning opportunities.
- The program requirements and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and in alignment with the institution's statement of undergraduate degree level expectations.
- The faculty have strong connections to the students in the program allowing for focused mentorship opportunities.
- The faculty are very dedicated, committed to their teaching, the experiences and education of their students to become knowledgeable, critical thinking, and problem-solving citizens in a rapidly changing politically context and global (re)ordering.
- The career opportunities for graduates of the program are quite vast and one-third of all jobs in Canada are in political or policy-related fields.

### **Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement**

- Finding opportunities to promote the program internally and externally as well as internationally.
- Examining ways to enhance the experience of TAs in the program to benefit all students.
- The program lacks a political theory course in the first year; a course that is fundamental to the discipline of political science.
- Students are required to take a first-year social policy course when they have not yet been introduced to policy.
- The program should consider introducing a Research Practicum course at the fourth year to allow strong students the opportunity to gain practical research experience in designing, conducting and managing elements of a faculty research project. Since many students continue in graduate programs or law school upon graduation, this type of course would support the development of research and related professional and communication skills.

### **The External Review**

The site visit took place on April 25 and 26, 2019. Dr. Nadine Changfoot and Dr. Otto Sanchez met with members of the Faculty as well as key stakeholders at the University, including Dr. Peter Stoett – Dean, Glenn Harvel – Associate Dean of the Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement, and members of the internal assessment team and a number of faculty, staff, and students.

The Faculty was grateful for the thoughtful and thorough review provided. The external reviewers recognized the high quality of the faculty, the rigorousness of the program, and the innovation in the content and delivery of the programs.

The reviewers identified eight recommendations, some of which have multiple components. The Faculty values the recommendations and have been very thoughtful in their responses.

### **Summary of Reviewer Recommendations and Faculty Responses**

#### ***Recommendation 1***

*POSC 1200 be transformed into a political theory course, providing students with a core education in theoretical concepts important to the discipline.*

#### ***Response***

The program faculty recognize the need for a better grounding in democratic political theory for our students. The program will submit a course change proposal for POSC 1200 (currently introduction to social policy) to convert it to an introductory political theory course.

#### ***Recommendation 2***

*Consideration be given at a program level to offer a flexible curriculum that would maximize course offerings throughout a student's experience of the degree in order to address student demand for more courses, especially in the third year.*

#### ***Response***

The program faculty will look for more opportunities to increase flexibility for students being mindful of the fact that there are limitations on how many courses can be offered, especially senior courses, due to both faculty and student numbers. The program faculty are adding several POSC-approved electives in the second and third year to give students more options, as well as changing prerequisites to make third-year courses more accessible to students. As our student numbers continue to increase we will be able to offer more courses in the third- and fourth-year levels when a greater number of senior students flow through the program.

#### ***Recommendation 3***

*Consideration be given to create research practicum courses at the fourth year to provide students opportunities to participate in faculty research programs.*

#### ***Response***

This is a good idea and would offer our exceptional fourth year students with an opportunity to be mentored by faculty and to learn more about the research process. Over the next two years, we will develop a Research Practicum course at the fourth year level as another option for students.

#### ***Recommendation 4***

*Consideration be given to the way the program promotes itself both internally to the University and externally to ensure the fullness of its strengths be known to prospective students. This would include promotion of the two specializations, possible further specializations (e.g. with the Faculty of Business and Information Technology (FBIT)), and courses connected with the City Idea Lab.*

**Response**

We believe we have a strong program and will promote it as such through continued collaboration with our Faculty of Social Science and Humanities (FSSH) Communications Specialist. We will continue to attend the Ontario Universities' Fair and Open Houses being mindful of showing our strengths by developing new promotional materials that showcase our program. We will also explore further specializations with FBIT and the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) and also revisit the Engineering and Public Policy program that had been developed but not received full approval. The City Lab is thriving and our Communications Specialist will devote time to publicizing it in the upcoming year as well.

**Recommendation 5**

*Monitor the availability of graduate students for Teaching Assistant (TA) positions.*

**Response**

There is no graduate program in the Political Science program, therefore, TAs lack expertise in political science. We will continue to make every effort to find the most qualified teaching assistants possible by connecting and working with the Graduate Program Directors more closely to establish the best fit for each course. We are also participating in the development of a new Master of Arts program in Communication, Law, and Politics; once in place, this will provide the opportunity to employ political science graduate students as TAs.

**Recommendation 6**

*The program be supported by Communications and Marketing in the promotion of its students' and faculty successes (e.g. awardees, distinctions, research grants).*

**Response**

Our Program Director, along with our FSSH Communication Specialist, will remain in constant contact with Marketing and Communication to ensure promotion of our program's faculty and student successes. We will seek to highlight our Faculty and student connections and contributions to the University and surrounding community.

**Recommendation 7**

*Information be provided on program alumni to support its curriculum development.*

**Response**

We will request support in keeping in touch with our alumni from the Alumni Association, Registrar's office and Academic Advising. We agree that they are a valuable source of curriculum development and provide great perspectives on their experiences. We can also consider a post grad follow up survey to provide more feedback.

**Recommendation 8**

*The program be consulted and given the opportunity to provide input on initiatives related to Internationalization and student life.*

**Response**

We agree that both Student Life and the revamped International Office could be important resources for our students and Program and will connect with them directly and ask to be consulted on issues related to our Program/students.

## Plan of Action

The table below presents a timeline of the actions planned to address the recommendations from the external report.

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow Up*	Timeline	Resources/Support Needed
POSC 1200 be transformed into a political theory course, providing students with a core education in theoretical concepts important to the discipline.	Submit major course change for POSC 1200 to change to an Introductory Democratic Theory course	Dr. Scott Aquanno UCC program representative/Dr. Shanti Fernando	Fall 2019 proposal to Faculty Council and CPRC for approval; Implementation in Fall 2020	
Consideration be given at a program level to offer a flexible curriculum that would maximize course offerings throughout a student's experience of the degree in order to address student demand for more courses, especially in the third year.	Review program map to look for opportunities to increase flexibility in senior level course offerings; if possible add new courses	Program Director Dr. Alyson King/program faculty members/Manager, Academic Advising	During 2019-2021 with changes to be implemented in Fall 2020 or 2021	
Consideration be given to create research practicum courses at the fourth year to provide students opportunities to participate in faculty research programs.	New course proposal for research practicum course	Dr. Scott Aquanno UCC program representative/Dr. Shanti Fernando/Dean FSSH	Fall 2019 new course proposal presented to Academic Council for approval and then CPRC for approval	
Consideration be given to the way the program promotes itself both internally to the University and externally to ensure the fullness of its strengths	Coordinate with internal FSSH Communications Specialist and Marketing and Communications office to ensure promotion of	Program Director Dr. Alyson King/Dean of FSSH/program faculty/Communication Specialist	2019-2020 and ongoing	

be known to prospective students.	program and student success			
The program be consulted and given the opportunity to provide input on initiatives related to Internationalization and student life.	Coordinate with Alumni Office, Advising office, Student Life, International Office, and Graduate Program Directors to ensure program and student success	Program Director Dr. Alyson King/program faculty	2019-2020 and ongoing	

\*The Dean of the Faculty, in consultation with the Program Review Chair shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. The details of progress made will be presented to Academic Council and the Board of Governors and filed in the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

**Due Date for 18-Month Follow-up on Plan of Action:** January 31, 2021

**Date of Next Cyclical Review:** 2025-2027