

# UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

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## 1. Review Summary

<b>Programs Reviewed:</b>	Political Science, B.A. Hons.: Specialist, Major, Minor  Economics and Political Science, B.A. Hons.: Specialist (Joint with Economics)  History and Political Science, B.A. Hons.: Specialist (Joint with History)
<b>Unit Reviewed:</b>	Department of Political Science, UTM
<b>Commissioning Officer:</b>	Vice-Principal Academic and Dean, University of Toronto Mississauga
<b>Reviewers:</b>	1. Professor Rudra (Rudy) Sil, SAS Director of the Huntsman Program in International Studies & Business, Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania 2. Professor Lois Harder, Professor and Principal, Peter Lougheed Leadership College, Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta
<b>Date of Review Visit:</b>	April 26 – 27, 2018

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# Previous Review

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**Date: December 13-14, 2010**

## Summary of Findings and Recommendations

### Undergraduate Programs

The reviewers observed the following strengths:

- Very positive student evaluations; very engaged students
- Effective use of graduates in undergraduate teaching

The reviewers identified the following areas of concern:

- Relatively large student to faculty ratio
- Difficult for students to enrol in fourth year courses at St. George; lack of consistent and accurate information about enrolling

The reviewers made the following recommendations:

- Offer more third year courses on a semester basis
- Offer academic counselling by graduate students to undergraduates

### Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following strengths:

- High quality faculty with diverse strengths

The reviewers identified the following areas of concern:

- Ill-advised reliance on part-time faculty

The reviewers made the following recommendations:

- Hire new positions to sustain department's positive trajectory

### Administration

The reviewers observed the following strengths:

- The Principal is actively working to build partnerships with the city of Mississauga and the local community in the area of multicultural programming and include communities.

The reviewers identified the following areas of concern:

- The physical separation between UTM and the ST George campus

The reviewers made the following recommendations:

- Department to actively support the Principal's fundraising initiatives

- Department to work together with the UTM administration to develop programs that reflect the increasing ethnic and religious diversity of the UTM campus

## Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

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### Documentation Provided to Reviewers

Terms of Reference; Department of Political Science Self-Study, 2018; Previous Review Report and Administrative Responses; UTM Degree Level Expectations, 2016; U of T Facts & Figures, 2016; UTM Academic Plan, 2017; UTM Vision Statement, 2017; UTM Academic Calendar, 2017-2018; UTM Viewbook, 2017-2018; U of T Domestic Viewbook, 2017-2018; Tri-Campus Framework.

### Consultation Process

The reviewers met with the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean; Vice-Dean, Teaching and Learning; Chair of the Department of Political Science, UTM; Graduate Chair of the Department of Political Science; senior and junior tenure-stream faculty members; teaching stream faculty members; undergraduate students; departmental administrative staff; staff from the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre the Hazel McCallion Academic Learning Centre.

## Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

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### 1. Undergraduate Program

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Curriculum and program delivery
  - Good range of topics in the curriculum
  - Specialist tracks provide students with good options for exploring their individual interests
  - Students have a clear understanding of the program structure and degree requirements
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
  - Satisfied with course selection, education quality and access to faculty – this is especially impressive given the “commuter campus” status

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Curriculum and program delivery

- Some year long courses offered, which allow students to drop the course as late as February, leaving students without any credit
- Students interested in a senior-level capstone or thesis project have to travel to St. George campus to engage in these activities
- Absence of courses on topics related to China and/or East Asia, especially surprising given the student demographics at UTM; students confirmed they would be interested in courses in this topic area
- Innovation
  - Confusion surrounding what constitutes experiential learning and community service learning; student interest in the opportunities exceeds the available activities
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - Many TAs are hired from St. George campus and do not attend classes due to long commute times, leaving them less prepared to lead tutorials
  - TAs are hired for a certain number of hours, which can lead to challenges with having enough hours left at the end of the term to grade final exams, and limits the ability to require longer written assignments
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
  - Faculty expressed concern that many students are not prepared to write well and there is an apparent lack of commitment to reading
    - Some junior female faculty have devoted time to designing and supporting writing intensive courses offered by the Academic Skills Centre and by devoting time to personally assisting students; the time and effort faculty are devoting to this is of some concern
  - Number of “weaker” students may be slightly larger at UTM when compared to St. George

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Curriculum and program delivery
  - Evaluate current yearlong course offerings to determine if it would be more appropriate to offer courses on a one-semester basis
  - Seriously consider the addition of a senior-level capstone and/or thesis project, especially given student interest in graduate studies
  - Explore options for offering a large lecture course on China and a more specialized course on East Asia
- Innovation
  - Establish a department-wide understanding of what “experiential learning” entails and encourage more of these activities and community service learning
    - Consider possible rewards and recognition for faculty who undertake additional work required for experiential learning experiences
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - Provide TAs with course lecture notes and try to ensure TAs regularly attend lectures when they have been assigned to a course for the first time

- Increase the number of TA hours for 100 and 200-level courses to allow TAs to provide more useful feedback
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
  - Address critical writing and reading challenges by:
    - considering campus-wide writing intensive courses that could be taken early in a student’s program
    - reviewing the writing intensive courses at the Academic Skills Centre and measuring the benefits against the time and effort devoted by the faculty involved
    - exploring smaller class sizes

## 2. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
  - Productive and visible faculty make impressive contributions for the size of the department
  - Excellent junior faculty are establishing themselves in their disciplinary fields
  - Faculty output is on par with other international peer departments
  - Successful grant acquisition in an environment that is growing evermore competitive
- Research
  - Diverse scope of research that cuts across various subfields and addresses themes of growing global importance
- Faculty
  - Actively participate in the training and supervision of graduate students at St. George campus
  - Many belong to professional associations, serving as officers, grant reviewers, coordinators, etc.

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Research
  - Absence of faculty working on the study of Indigenous politics, as well as Chinese and/or East Asian politics
- Faculty
  - Recent faculty losses will need to be filled
  - New faculty and instructors may not be familiar with managing TAs
  - Women and racial minorities were called on much more often to provide emotional and caring support for students
  - Demographics of current faculty are a bit unbalanced: all senior and full professors are men, there is a small associate professor pool, and large group of assistant professors where all the female faculty in the department reside

- Faculty demographics can present challenges when identifying department leadership

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Research
  - Prioritize extending the faculty scope and research output in the areas of Indigenous politics, and Chinese/East Asian politics
- Faculty
  - Ensure faculty renewal:
    - considers racial diversity and gender
    - considers the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations
    - considers shifts in the demographics of the student body
  - Provide guidance and mentoring to new faculty on how to best manage TAs to ensure positive teaching and learning experiences for undergraduate students, and to ensure good time management for faculty and instructors
  - Emotional and supportive work provided by female and racial minority faculty should be acknowledged in annual evaluations and tenure and promotion decisions

### 3. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
  - Good research community formed between UTM and St. George faculty
  - Strong camaraderie and respect among faculty, staff and students
- Organizational and financial structure
  - Extremely competent staff who contribute to the overall positive environment
  - While financial structure does not include much flexibility for supporting strategic initiatives, the Dean's office is very supportive of several identified priorities surrounding research, student engagement, TA needs, etc.

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Organizational and financial structure
  - Administrative staff are at times overworked; strain is growing
  - An executive committee does not seem to exist at the department
  - Difficult to have substantive planning and governance discussions at UTM due to faculty commitments to St. George and travel times
    - This was a reason given for not having completed a curriculum mapping exercise yet

- Department does not feel able to take up new opportunities coming out of the UTM Dean's office because of a lack of time and resources available
  - Some of the new administrative initiatives would be an asset, but possible implementation is overshadowed by the concern of further increasing staff workload
- Administrative and faculty offices are located in separate spaces
- Computer infrastructure, primarily for faculty, needs improvement

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Organizational and financial structure
  - Complete a strategic needs assessment to evaluate staff workload and to identify places to increase efficiencies
  - Create an executive committee structure, consisting of the Chair, Associate Chair, and Manager, to address and consult on issues that arise at the department
  - Promote on-site academic planning that prioritizes student and community engagement at UTM
  - Seek support from the University regarding administrative challenges so that the department may take advantage of new initiatives
  - Monitor move to new shared offices (set for August 2018) to ensure arrangement is working for all members of the department



## 2. Administrative Response & Implementation Plan

UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  
MISSISSAUGA

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

March 7, 2019

Professor Susan McCahan  
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs  
Simcoe Hall  
University of Toronto

Dear Professor McCahan,

I am writing to provide an administrative response to the External Review of UTM's Department of Political Science, which was held in April 2018. The Political Science, B.A. Hons. (Specialist, Major, Minor); Economics and Political Science, B.A. Hons. (Specialist); and History and Political Science, B.A. Hons. (Specialist) programs were reviewed. The review noted the high quality and diverse strengths of the faculty, highlighting in particular the contributions of the younger generation of scholars in the unit. The review also praised the high level of engagement of students in these programs. With appropriate support, the Department is well positioned to work with academic and community partners to engage with and reflect the increasing diversity of the UTM campus.

The Department has already made a number of significant changes in response to the review and in preparation for the changes and activities outlined in this letter. In particular, the Department is excited by the prospect of creative and energetic leadership provided by a new generation of faculty and will have a new Chair, Professor Andrea Olive, effective July 1, 2019. The Department has also taken preliminary steps to alleviate the "over-work" of staff identified by reviewers and will soon receive additional staffing support amounting to 20% of a Financial Officer. The Department is contemplating requesting further adjustments to administrative staffing to provide additional assistance to the Chair.

The next sections directly address the issues raised by the reviewers and highlighted in your request for a response. An implementation plan with timelines can be found at the end of this letter.

### **Administration**

*The reviewers urged consideration of administrative/committee structures that would allow for more concerted attention to setting and realizing Department priorities.*

The new Chair will scrutinize existing administrative structures and will implement new structures in the department. In preparation, she has been provided with some additional administrative staffing resources, and the Department is considering a request for further adjustments to staffing to provide additional support to the Chair.

Professor Olive has indicated that curriculum mapping is a high priority for her first year, and she intends to engage the Department in a full-scale mapping exercise. The results of this exercise will inform a curricular review and later adjustments to administrative structures.

*The reviewers suggested ways to ensure that TAs are adequately prepared to lead tutorials. The reviewers also flagged the need for guidance for new teaching staff on working effectively and efficiently with TAs to support undergraduate student learning outcomes and excellent teaching experience for graduate students.*

As a member of a tri-campus graduate unit, the Department has primarily relied on TA workshops run at St. George. Additional training workshops for TAs in writing intensive courses have been provided at UTM by the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (RGASC). Faculty teaching writing intensive courses have had good experiences with the latter training, and the Department will explore a collaboration with the RGASC to provide these resources to TAs in other courses. The Department will also consider organizing an orientation for new teaching staff to include information about effective TA management and mentoring.

## **Curriculum**

*The reviewers encouraged the department to develop a shared understanding of experiential learning and to ensure supports are in place to engage in more of these activities.*

The Department strongly supports the expansion of experiential learning opportunities. However, as noted by the reviewers, engaging in such activities has implications for administrative support and faculty workload. The Department believes these activities should be carefully integrated into the curriculum to maximize impact while balancing the load on faculty and staff and will use the previously mentioned curriculum mapping exercise as a mechanism for developing a shared understanding of the role of – and opportunities for – experiential learning in the program.

*The reviewers asked whether students might be better served by having all courses offered on a semester-long basis, a change which could also allow for greater flexibility with respect to assigning faculty and teaching assistants to courses.*

A number of year-long courses have been split into sequences in recent years, including one change this year which replaced JPE250Y with JPE251F and JPE252S. The Department believes further splits in the future to be likely.

However, the Department's position is that the advantages and disadvantages of a split should be evaluated on a course-by-course basis by the curriculum committee, in coordination with the course's instructor(s). Such a decision would depend on the content and skills to be developed, as informed by the proposed curriculum map, and on the pedagogical choices made by the Department and instructor(s).

*The reviewers suggested ways to support specialist students at UTM who are interested in pursuing graduate studies.*

The reviewers proposed a “capstone” course for fourth year students in specialist programs. This proposal has already been adopted. The course has been approved for the 2019-20 calendar and will be taught in the upcoming academic year.

The reviewers also proposed closer coordination with the Department’s undergraduate student society, and we have also adopted this proposal. This year, faculty participated in a workshop hosted by UTM’s Political Science and Pre-Law Association devoted precisely to issues relating to grad school admission.

## **Faculty**

*The reviewers were concerned that female faculty were differentially spending more time supporting undergraduate students beyond basic course requirements (e.g., supporting writing skills development or providing experiential learning opportunities). The reviewers asked how this impacts annual reviews and tenure and promotion.*

The annual review process in Political Science is performed first at a tri-campus level, by a large and diverse tri-campus committee, and then reviewed by a much smaller UTM committee. Tenure and promotion committees also feature tri-campus representation. In all cases, the committees take account of the full range of activities and contributions of Political Science faculty, including the activities mentioned by the reviewers. The Chair of the UTM Department always has a voice in these processes, and historically, no issues have been identified. Nevertheless, both the Interim and incoming Chairs will carefully monitor these processes going forward. It should also be noted that the UTM Department is represented on a fairly new tri-campus Political Science equity committee responsible for reviewing a whole range of gender-related issues. The new Chair will avail herself of the work done by this tri-campus committee.

The Department acknowledges that the two writing intensive courses currently in the program are primarily taught by female faculty but emphasizes that male faculty engage in experiential learning offerings, both in the classroom and through research opportunities. The Department expects the planned curriculum mapping exercise and review to identify additional opportunities for such teaching. The incoming Chair will vigilantly monitor both the distribution of workload and its impact on annual reviews, tenure, and promotion.

*The reviewers made a number of recommendations to inform complement planning, including the need to attend to diversity, the TRC recommendations, regional gaps, and support for experiential learning.*

The reviewers’ recommendations align with the Departments desires. In addition, the incoming Chair has expressed an expectation that curricular needs, as defined by the planned curriculum

map, will influence complement planning by identifying gaps and opportunities for skills development and experiential learning.

In the near term, the Department will be encouraged to fill up to two vacancies, one created in 2018 and one expected in 2019. The Department has begun the process of deliberating the nature of these positions, including area, stream, and rank. Furthermore, issues such as diversity, the TRC recommendations, and the need to support experiential learning will feature prominently in the deliberations about both the position description and any potential candidates.

## **Students**

*The reviewers noted faculty concerns regarding incoming students' writing skills and encouraged consideration of campus-wide supports.*

In its Academic Plan, UTM has committed to supporting the development of students' foundational writing skills. A working group recently presented recommendations to the campus that included the creation of required first year courses where the writing process is taught and practiced, and the expansion of funded supports to develop students' writing skills within the disciplines in upper year courses.

The Department is supportive of these efforts but is already taking steps, within the Political Science programs, to support the development of writing skills. As noted by reviewers, the Department is already offering a number of writing intensive courses with support provided by the Dean's Writing Initiative. The faculty will consider expanding participation in the program, potentially into first year political science courses. These efforts will be guided by the previously mentioned curriculum mapping work that the Department will undertake.

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## **Implementation Plan - Department of Political Science, UTM**

### Immediate Term (6 months)

#### Administration

- Increase the administrative support available to the Department by 20% of a financial officer. *[Department with funding from the Dean's Office]*
- Offer an orientation to new instructional staff to highlight effective TA management and mentoring. *[Department in collaboration with the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre]*

## Curriculum

- In conjunction with the new Chair stepping up, begin a curriculum mapping exercise to inform further curricular changes. *[Department with support from the Dean's Office and Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre]*

## Faculty

- Deliberate on a medium-term hiring plan to fill up to two expected vacancies. *[Department]*

## Medium Term (1-2 years)

### Administrative

- Monitor and improve the orientation provided to new instructional staff, and consider expanded TA training at UTM to support important issues like writing instruction. *[Department in collaboration with the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre]*

### Curriculum

- Continue curriculum mapping efforts. *[Department]*
- Begin a curriculum review, including a review of experiential learning in the curriculum, using the developing curriculum map. *[Department with support from the Experiential Learning Office]*

### Faculty

- Fill faculty vacancies, with consideration provided to diversity, the TRC recommendations, and identified curricular needs and opportunities. *[Department with support from the Office of the Dean]*

### Students

- Expand writing skills development based on the results of curriculum mapping and changes to writing support at the campus level due to the Academic Plan. *[Department with funding from the Dean's Writing Initiative]*

## Long Term (3-5 years)

### Curriculum

- Maintain the curriculum map and continue review of programs. *[Department]*

### Faculty

- Engage in annual complement planning informed by diversity needs, the TRC recommendations, and identified curricular needs and opportunities. *[Department with support from the Office of the Dean]*

Please let me know if you have any questions about this response. The Department Chair and Dean will review the progress made on this plane annually, as part of a regularly scheduled meeting. The next review of these programs is scheduled to be completed by the 2026-27 academic year.

Sincerely,



Amrita Daniere  
Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean

### **3. Committee on Academic Policy & Programs (AP&P) Findings**

At its meeting on April 2, 2019, the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations.

### **4. Institutional Executive Summary**

The reviewers praised the range of topics in the curriculum, which allows students the opportunity to explore individual interests. The reviewers were impressed by the student satisfaction with access to faculty, especially given the commuter status for many faculty and students. Overall, the reviewers complimented the positive environment at the Department and highlighted the healthy relationship with St. George campus. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: addressing faculty concerns regarding incoming students' writing skills by encouraging consideration of campus-wide supports; addressing issue of female faculty providing disproportionate support to undergraduate students beyond basic course requirements (e.g. writing skills development, experiential learning opportunities) and the impact of this on annual reviews and tenure and promotion; developing a shared understanding of experiential learning and ensuring supports are in place to increase engagement in these activities; offering all courses on a semester-long basis to allow for greater flexibility in assigning faculty and teaching assistants to courses; supporting specialist students at UTM who are interested in pursuing graduate studies; ensuring that TAs are adequately prepared to lead tutorials; providing guidance for new teaching staff on working effectively and efficiently with TAs to support undergraduate student learning outcomes and teaching experience for graduate students; considering diversity, TRC recommendations, regional gaps, and support for experiential learning in complement planning; and considering administrative/committee structures that would allow for more concerted attention to setting and realizing Department priorities. The Dean's Administrative Response describes the Campus, unit and programs' responses to the reviewers' recommendations, including an implementation plan for any changes necessary as a result.

### **5. Monitoring and Date of Next Review**

The Department Chair and Dean will review the progress made on this plan annually, as part of a regularly scheduled meeting. The next review of these programs is scheduled to be completed by the 2025-2026 academic year.

### **Distribution**

On May 17, 2019, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean of the University of Toronto Mississauga, the Secretaries of AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to the Chair of the Department.