



vpacad@sfu.ca
www.sfu.ca/vpacademic
TEL: 778.782.3925
FAX: 778.782.5876

8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC
Canada V5A 1S6

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate **DATE** January 14, 2026
FROM Dilson Rassier, Provost and Vice-President Academic, and Chair, SCUP **PAGES** 1/29
RE: External Review Mid-Cycle Report for the Department of Political Science (SCUP 26-06)

At its meeting on January 14, 2026, SCUP reviewed and approved the External Review Mid-Cycle Report for the Department of Political Science that resulted from its 2022 External Review.

The following documents are attached for the information of Senate:

- Action Plan Update
- Assessment of Education Goals
- SCUTL's Feedback on the Assessment of Educational Goals

C: Sanjay Jeram, Chair, Department of Political Science, FASS



8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC
Strand Hall, Room 3000
Canada V5A 1S6

TEL: 778.782.5731
FAX: 778.782.5876

vpacad@sfu.ca
www.sfu.ca/vpacademic

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Dilson Rassier, Chair, SCUP DATE December 10, 2025
FROM Peter Hall, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Academic PAGES
RE: External Review Mid-Cycle Report for the Department of Political Science

The External Review of the Department of Political Science was undertaken in March 2022. As per the Senate guidelines, the unit is required to submit a mid-cycle report describing its progress in implementing the external review action plan and the assessment of its educational goals. The action plan update has been reviewed by the faculty dean. The Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL) has provided constructive feedback to the unit on the assessment of its educational goals. The recommendations from SCUTL will be incorporated into the unit's self-study report for the next external review.

The following documents are attached for the information of SCUP:

- Action Plan Update
- Assessment of Educational Goals
- SCUTL's Feedback on the Assessment of Educational Goals

c: Sanjay Jeram, Interim Chair, Department of Political Science
Laurel Weldon, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



Department of
Political Science

AQ 6069
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC
Canada V5A 1S6

TEL 778.782.5487

polgrad@sfu.ca
www.sfu.ca/politics

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Peter Hall, Vice Provost and Associate
Vice-President, Academic **DATE** November 6, 2025

FROM Sanjay Jeram, Interim Chair, Political
Science **PAGES** 2

RE: Mid-Cycle Review

Dear Dr. Hall,

Please see below a summary of the Mid-Cycle Report, based on the attached Action Plan and Educational Goals documents. The summary highlights our progress to date, key priorities moving forward, and areas identified for continued attention.

Undergraduate Programming

A marketing and recruitment committee was formed in Summer 2024, leading to enhanced outreach strategies and a new POL LinkedIn page. Career development resources and alumni engagement have expanded, with an upcoming speaker event scheduled. Course scheduling has improved to minimize conflicts and align with learning tracks. Enhanced collaboration with the Political Science Student Union (PSSU) has fostered student engagement and a sense of community among students.

Graduate Programming

MA completion paths were clarified with updates to course requirements and calendar language. A formal extension policy was introduced to support timely degree completion. Graduate students are now more involved in departmental meetings and policy discussions. TA training has expanded to include AI pedagogy and the management of sensitive topics.

Research & Experiential Learning

New initiatives include a Political Experiments Lab and a Policy Insights Lab, both focusing on diversity and identity. Public engagement remains strong, with 37 events hosted since 2023. The Department continues to support open-access publishing and participation in conferences.

Administration & Governance

A new Constitution was adopted, and transparency in the budget was enhanced. Staff roles are being clarified following the stabilization of personnel. Curriculum reform is progressing to remove bottlenecks and support new interdisciplinary programs (e.g., PPE, Accelerated Law).

Educational Goals Assessment

Curriculum mapping and syllabi reviews are scheduled to evaluate subject expertise and methodological skills. Assignments are shifting toward practical formats that align with the BC Future Workforce Framework. Surveys and focus groups indicate a strong interest among students in inclusive and community-focused learning. Graduate goals emphasize methodological training, subfield expertise, professional growth, teaching skills, and early dissemination of research.

Next Steps

Ongoing data collection and analysis will support the 2028 External Review. Findings will be shared internally for feedback and refinement of educational goals.



Dr. Sanjay Jeram

University Lecturer and Interim Chair | Department of Political Science
Simon Fraser University | AQ 6052
8888 University Dr., Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6
sjeram@sfu.ca



External Review Mid-Cycle Report

Section A

To be completed by the Responsible Unit Person, e.g., Chair or Director

Unit Under Review: Department of Political Science

Date of Review Site Visit: March 16 – 18, 2022

Responsible Unit Person: Sanjay Jeram

Faculty Dean: Laurel Weldon

ACTION		PROGRESS MADE
1. PROGRAMMING		
1.1	Action(s) to be taken	
1.1.1 Undergraduate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen our outreach strategy to better communicate with undergraduate students and better promote our program options (Honours, Major, Minor, French Cohort Program, NATO Field School, Social Data Analytics Minor, Co-op) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use the visual (“Your POL Journey”) developed by the previous UG Chair that helps Major students to select courses and develop similar visuals for other program options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Summer 2024, Andy Hira (Chair), Vasu Seli (Communications Coordinator), and Amanda Dalton (Undergraduate Advisor and Recruiter) formed a marketing and recruitment committee and delivered a report to the Department on improving our strategy. The report drew upon the BC Student Outcomes Surveys, SFU surveys, internal surveys of our current major and minors, as well as focus groups with POL students. Secondary research was also consulted and the key takeaway from the data is that our students – and POL students more generally – are concerned about their career pathways. <p>So far, we have done the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have added a career development section to our webpage highlighting opportunities for students to complement in-class learning with on-the-job experience

<p>b. Hold annual events with alumni to showcase career prospects</p> <p>c. In collaboration with the Communications Coordinator and the Undergraduate Advisor, set up events where UG students can meet faculty outside of class.</p> <p>d. With the support of the Communications Coordinator, expand our use of the website, social media and the Department newsletter to better communicate with former, current and future students</p> <p>e. Organize brief presentations on program options in all 100-level courses</p> <p>f. Attend FASS and university-wide events destined at potential, incoming and current students, such as FASS Welcome Day.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have started to update our Alumni page, calling attention to the varied and successful career paths of our graduates. - We launched a POL LinkedIn page on July 15, 2025, to connect our current and former students, which will promote learning and networking opportunities for current students. As of July 31st, we had 76 followers. - Our Communications Coordinator has boosted our followers (~17%) on our social media channels. - We recently acquired Google Analytics data to tell us how many visitors are interacting with the Department’s website. There has been a notable trend upward (~20%) from 2023 to 2025. - We are currently organizing our first alumni speakers’ event for the Spring ‘26 Term, featuring alumna Dr. Nancy Teeple. We aim to include alums working across different fields to engage with our current students. Dr. Jeram brought in three alums to his Canadian Politics course who work in government, polling, and research, in Spring 2024. This format generated interest from students. - We have started to participate in FASS-wide recruitment events. Notably, Andy Hira gave a talk to incoming students to explain what POL is and how it can provide foundational skills for various career paths. Several faculty members participated in a Spring 2025 Careers Evening aimed at Upper Division students, and a Fall 2025 welcome event for new intended POL majors. Faculty and staff also staffed a booth at the SFU Welcome Day. - We have held yearly information sessions for SFU students applying for the BC Legislative Intern Program, including SFU alumni who have completed the internship program. We have also had several in-class talks (e.g. in POL 221) from former BC interns and Co-op students, who have shared their experiences working for the provincial and federal governments. - The Political Science Advisor now routinely attends every POL 151 course (one of our largest enrolled classes) to promote our program options and encourage students to get help with planning their courses. We will be rolling this out to other 100-level courses this year. In addition, the PSSU has spoken at lectures in multiple courses
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	<p>throughout 2025, promoting social events and encouraging students to participate in student governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are strategically incorporating high-impact keywords to enhance our visibility on search engines, including Political Science, Canadian Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Theory, Public Administration, Public Policy, Indigenous Politics, Federalism, and Elections.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop our policies and procedures around scheduling and course allocation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implement recently developed scheduling principles to reduce scheduling time conflicts b. Better align course scheduling with the department’s learning tracks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are responding to student demand by increasing offerings of high-demand courses (e.g., POL 200W) while avoiding scheduling overlaps. - The WQB recertification process was generally successful, as we continue to offer options for our students to satisfy these requirements. A noted deficiency is the lack of W courses at the 300-level. The UG Chair, Clare McGovern, has submitted five new WQB proposals (1 of which is W 300-level) and is currently working to identify other suitable courses. - We are reviewing our course articulation arrangements with our five largest transfer institutions. We have identified several ways to smooth the transfer process for students, and provide them with clearer information. We will be implementing these in 2025-2026. We will extend the previous Undergraduate Chair’s work on program-planning visuals to develop similar tools for transfer students, and students on the new Accelerated Law Program (which begins in Fall 2026).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew the relationship with the PSSU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Invite the PSSU to attend our Department meetings b. Schedule recurring meetings between the Undergraduate Program Chair and the PSSU c. Organize events (alumni, research, etc.) in collaboration with the PSSU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Political Science Student Union (PSSU) members have regularly attended Department meetings over the past year. - We have offered the PSSU office space to boost morale and connection to the Department. Clare McGovern has established a good working relationship with the PSSU, and is meeting regularly with them ahead of Department and Undergraduate Committee meetings. This helps us brief PSSU on items on the agenda and make sure we’re addressing their ideas and concerns. At the PSSU’s request, the Undergraduate Committee will be reviewing the

	<p>Academic Calendar this year, to make sure it reflects the courses we regularly offer.</p>
<p>1.1.2. Graduate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better feature Dept. research strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. We will work with our communications coordinator to better highlight faculty strengths and opportunities to engage in research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The website features faculty and graduate accomplishments, as well as the various research affiliations of the Department. This will hopefully provide targeted marketing to potential graduate students. - We highlight findings from the BC Baccalaureate Graduate Survey on our website to demonstrate the value of a Political Science degree as a strong foundation for diverse and rewarding career paths.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of our self-study for this review, we have identified specific goals for both the MA and PhD programs. We will continue to examine ways to monitor students' progress on these goals. 	<p>The following data has been collected since 2023 and will continue until the external review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment of course syllabi of POL 800, 801, 802 and 803 and of MA and PhD project papers/theses by Graduate Chair/Committee. - Within-course assessment by instructors. - Participation in Departmental methods workshops and attendance at methods summer schools. - Assessment of MA and PhD field exams/project papers/theses/comprehensive exams by Graduate Chair/Committee. - Within-course assessment by instructors. - Student participation in Department and professional panels and conferences, including Department professional development workshops; student participation in co-ops. - Exit survey of graduate students (self-assessment) - Student instructional skills development through participation in SFU and Department instructional skills workshops; experience as tutor marker, TA, and/or instructor. - Course instructor assessment of TAs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the MA paths to completion. These currently include course-based (capped by an exam or essay), project/extended essays, and thesis options. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. We will work to clarify the definitions and 	<p>Substantial changes were made to clarify and simplify the different MA completion options, and to better align them with University policy. We completed the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eliminated the Extended Essays Option from the Calendar. 2. Changed the capstone course (POL 892) units for the Project Option from 10 units to 6 units with a maximum word count of 10,000 for the project paper.

<p>requirements of our MA completion options.</p> <p>b. We will assess whether to retain all the currently offered options.</p>	<p>3. Changed the field exam (POL 897) units for the Course-intensive Option from 6 units to 2 units.</p> <p>4. Changed the number of required courses for the Thesis Option from five courses to four courses.</p> <p>5. Added a statement regarding the already existing B minimum requirement for required courses</p> <p>6. As of Spring 2026: Added language to the Calendar to clarify that direct entry into the MA Thesis Option is not possible. Direct entry is only possible into the Project and Course-intensive Options.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve MA and PhD completion times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Formulate a plan to track progress on a more systematic basis and identify means for early intervention, such as the Graduate Chair holding meetings with students and/or supervisors, to reduce the possibility of future students taking a long time to complete. b. Create a formal extension policy to be posted on the Department website to create better accountability and provide further opportunities for intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ad a) Annual Progress Reports are more consistently used as a method of early intervention by the Graduate Committee. - Ad b) A formal Department extension policy was created and is accessible on the Department website https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/politics/documents/Graduate/Extension%20policy%20Political%20Science_Jan%209%202023.pdf.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving communications and relationships with graduate students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. We do have a graduate student lounge and will continue to promote knowledge about its 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political Science graduate students have been invited to and are attending Department meetings and Graduate Program Committee meetings (when appropriate). - Graduate students have also been included in discussion about program changes, policy updates and revisions to the Political Science Graduate Student Handbook.

<p>availability to students. In addition, the faculty lounge has been opened up to graduate students to promote more social interaction.</p> <p>b. We are shifting towards a model of ongoing engagement with the graduate students. Faculty and graduate students have met at happy hours and we will continue to pursue more socializing opportunities.</p> <p>c. We have invited the PS graduate students to send a representative to Dept. meetings.</p> <p>d. The graduate Chair is engaged in a series of meetings with graduate students to develop new events and ways to engage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Several social events have been organized throughout the year, bringing faculty and graduate students together. - We have continued with our yearly TA training program, which includes 4 workshops every Fall semester. Over the last two years, we have included new activities and guidance on AI in teaching, and handling sensitive discussions. These new topics combine with existing content on running tutorials, grading, and preparing students for exams, as well as connecting our TAs to SFU support services. We also help TAs debrief their tutorials and troubleshoot any difficulties as they adjust to the role. The strong attendance at the workshops has helped to build a cohort among the new TAs, as well as connect them to peer support from experienced TAs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting graduate student research activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Speakers Committee will invite graduate students to join panels with faculty commentary to present their ongoing research, followed by social events. The students have expressed enthusiasm over this plan. b. The Dept. will more vigorously promote and support professional conference participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We saw a record number of graduate students attending academic conferences during the 2023–2024 academic year; however, due to the recent budget constraints, we have returned to a more competitive funding model. Despite this shift, we continue to offer regular funding opportunities to support student participation in conferences.

<p>by graduate students. Funds have already been set aside for this.</p>	
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2. RESEARCH

2.1 Action(s) to be taken

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department has a combination of unique offerings that combine research with student training and experiential opportunities. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Clean Energy Research Group: http://www.sfu.ca/politics/CERG.html b. Feminist Mobilization and Economic Empowerment Project: http://www.sfu.ca/politics/feministmovement.html c. Canadian University Diversity Scan, http://www.sfu.ca/politics/canadian-university-diversity-scan.html d. Digital Diplomacy, http://www.sfu.ca/politics/digital-diplomacy.html e. Governance of Migration, http://www.sfu.ca/politics/governance-migration.html f. The CRC Chair in Public Policy, Dr. Howlett, offers regular student RA and co-authorship opportunities, and has agreed to participate with the Chair in designing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These research opportunities will be complemented by the opening of the lab for political experiments. We expect plenty of opportunities for students. - Moreover, we are adding new training pathways through our participation in the Accelerated Law Program (starting Fall 2026) and the pending Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) major program (currently at FPP stage). We will also be contributing Political Science courses to the pending Public Policy major program (currently at NOI stage).
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<p>public events around public policy</p> <p>g. Our incoming Somjee Chair will help to provide student field research opportunities in India</p> <p>h. In addition, we offer advanced student research training opportunities through our Honour's Programme, the NATO field school, the Social Data Analytics, the French Cohort Programme, and the Public Policy Minor, to be launched in Fall 2023.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department is currently engaged in developing a policy research insights lab that will create new primary data on political attitudes and behaviour. The lab is tentatively focused on social identities, equality, and diversity issues, which fits in with SFU's strategic goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress on the lab's infrastructure continues and the hire in Political Psychology for July 2026 will be huge boost for this initiative.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department continues to celebrate the diversity and mixed methods approach of its faculty. We will promote a wide range of approaches in our teaching and research. The Department will continue to support faculty to develop research projects and collaborations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Dept. set aside funds to host a reception at the Western PS Assn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Department has since supported faculty members hold thematic workshops at the recent APSA conference in Vancouver.

<p>conference that will help to enhance its reputation.</p> <p>b. The Dept. has offered some funding to help support open access publications.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department is hiring a new Somjee Chair in Indian Politics. We hope that the process will be completed by Sept. 2022. This will bring attention and possibilities for comparative research and global collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shivaji Mukherjee was hired. He has brought new courses and a dynamic research program to the Department, which focuses on civil conflicts in South Asia.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department is working with our communications coordinator to reach out through social media and events to better publicize research strengths. For example, the Chair is working with other SFU units around a public engagement event related to corporate social responsibility in Fall 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2023, POL hosted 14 public events on research topics, followed by 13 in 2024. In the first nine months of 2025, 10 such events have already been held, reflecting the Department’s sustained commitment to fostering public engagement with research.

3. ADMINISTRATION

3.1	Action(s) to be taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department will begin a long-term process of governance reform with the leadership of the Chair. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Department will develop a new constitution, and new policies and procedures, including ones around agenda-setting. b. The Department will discuss programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have a new Constitution in place that clarifies our mission and addresses previous policy shortcomings, such as scheduling and workload. - We have discussed priorities and renewal every Spring and are now filling a political psychology position. We have also implemented a new annual process for reviewing Faculty Renewal Planning

<p>priorities and faculty renewal.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department is rebuilding its staff and hopes to stabilize support personnel over the coming year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. We are undergoing an HR review led by the new Dept. manager to clarify staff roles and workloads. This has been initiated in Summer 2022. b. We have a new Manager, Advisor, Communications Coordinator, Graduate and Undergraduate Program Assistants, all of whom are continuing to improve their performance as they learn their duties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2022, the Department identified the need for an HR review to clarify staff roles and workload. While a formal review has not been completed, this was largely due to changes in the Manager position, with several transitions in that role over the past few years. - Starting August 25, 2025, the Communications Coordinator position was moved to the FASS Dean’s Office to support both the Department of Political Science and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. This change is part of a pilot project to centralize communications functions across the faculty. - With the staff team now stabilized, the current Manager will review the proposed job descriptions, ensure they are aligned with actual roles and duties, and then submit them to HR for processing. In the meantime, responsibilities have been clarified through practice, and workloads are being monitored closely to support long-term stability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department manager and the Chair will work over the next year to create a more transparent and rational budget and course release policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have introduced a new transparent budget system. The budget was reviewed in detail at the last Department Meeting of Spring 2025. The outgoing Chair, Andy Hira, introduced a course release policy discussion, but no action was taken at this time; however, some general principles around CRs reached some consensus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department Chair will begin the process of creating a rational system around curriculum planning and course allocation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are working on reforming our curriculum. Beyond adding new courses to complement the Accelerated Law and PPE programs, we are beginning to address the “bottlenecks” that prevent students from finishing their degrees in a timely fashion.
4. WORKING ENVIRONMENT	
4.1	Action(s) to be taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinitiate annual meetings between the Chair and every faculty member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We’ve held annual holiday parties with good attendance from faculty, staff, and graduate students. We have had ~four additional

<p>a. The Chair has already held one-hour meetings with every faculty member. Future chairs can continue this on an annual basis, and/or in conjunction with biennial reviews.</p>	<p>social events, such as celebrating promotions, however, the budget constrains such activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department will help to reinvigorate collegiality through developing stronger personal relationships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Department will shift its meetings to Fridays, generally at Harbour Centre, in order to facilitate in person meeting attendance. The meetings will be followed by a faculty-staff luncheon invitation. b. As noted above, the Dept. has already and will continue to design social and professional in person meetings with students on a regular basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department Meetings have been taking place on Fridays. HC did not work out as a venue in terms of boosting attendance, and staff had a hard time making it back to Burnaby. We started to take meeting attendance, and it has improved. All meetings are hybrid. - See above for student meetings around careers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As noted above, the Dept. will examine its long-term curriculum development at both the G and UG levels and the way that courses are allocated among instructors, including reliability, timing, WQB requirements, and workload. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Department started to shift in this direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We encourage every faculty member to have a balanced teaching portfolio between lower division and upper division/graduate courses while acknowledging that it is in our best interest to utilize faculty strengths. We are highly constrained by the loss of members and the fact that at least ½ of our members have joint appointments, are on leave, or have other SFU obligations at any given time.

<p>last Spring with adopting principles around course scheduling that help to avoid courses at the same levels being scheduled at the same times.</p> <p>b. The Chair will seek out and present different models for course planning in order to rationalize the system and consider equity workload in teaching and service.</p>	
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5. OTHER: _____

5.1 Action(s) to be taken

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting and building upon Dept. strengths. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Chair will seek to develop a mission statement for the Dept. over the coming year that will help us to better define a long-term strategy and way to differentiate it from other PS Depts. in Canada and elsewhere. When consensus is achieved, it will help to bring the Dept. together and communicate our research and teaching above action planthe to students and the wider audience of scholars. This would also help us to better define ourselves in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Department has adopted a mission statement around the embrace of mixed methods and policy-relevant analysis.
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terms of graduate student recruitment efforts.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATO field school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Department will examine the long-term resource needs of the field school and have an open discussion about the level of support it wishes to provide. This will take place in Spring 2023 and be linked to the next faculty resource plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Department tried twice to hire a second instructor for the NATO Field School. The first time, all 3 candidates turned down the offer. The second time, the search was frozen.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department will initiate the process of selecting a new Chair in Spring 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sanjay Jeram will be Interim Chair for 8 months , from September 2025 to April 2026, followed by Remi Léger for a full term.

The above action plan has been considered by the unit under review and has been discussed and agreed to by the Faculty Dean.

Unit Leader (signed)	Date
 Sanjay Jeram University Lecturer Interim Department Chair	October 8 th , 2025

DEAN'S COMMENTS ON THE MID-CYCLE REPORT

The Department sounds like it is making good progress on the goals identified by the external review committee and the response developed in the Action Plan. Positive developments include greater efforts at visibility for research and concomitant interest in the Department's on-line presence. The systematic efforts on recruitment and marketing are noted. It was good to hear also about efforts to ensure that course planning foregrounds student interest and prioritizing offering the classes required by the curriculum. The development of the research labs that offer exciting and enriching opportunities for graduates and undergraduates is also an important advance. Incorporating student representatives into Department governance is also a step in the right direction. The stabilization of the staff complement, and the strength of the current staff, is also noted as an important improvement in the Department's ability to deliver on the academic mission. The new research centers and identified strengths are exciting opportunities, and I note that they dovetail with the priorities listed in the strategic plans of the Faculty, the President, the Provost and the VPR. The hiring of the Somjee Chair represents a new area of strength and interdisciplinary connection for the Department, as evidenced in the activities connecting the Department to others with a focus on Asia as well as the short course the Department supported at the national conference (APSA) held here in Vancouver. The Department may want to think about whether to highlight the ways Department strengths create such connections, on its website or in other Departmental internal and external planning and communications documents. The new curricula (PPE; ALP) for undergraduates are exciting developments, and I do hope the Department will find a way to visualize these new pathways, once established, as promised in the action plan.

Participating in welcome day and other Faculty-wide and University-wide events is good, but should be seen as a standard part of University life, not a particularly noteworthy achievement. Still, to the extent that this was not being done before, it is great to see the Department stepping up. The Chair should endeavor to ensure that this obligation of representing the department and discipline is taken up by the wider faculty and not just borne by the Chair and the staff. The faculty are the best spokespersons for the curriculum and the content of faculty research. It would also be good to see the department organize a more comprehensive and high-profile alumni event for all students, perhaps in cooperation with the PSSU and/or alumni association. This would aid current students in their career networking, attract additional interest to the department, and support the Department's advancement efforts. I also note the recent success of the Department in teaching and research awards, and encourage the faculty and staff to keep up their nomination efforts for both internal and external awards and honors. I also support faculty efforts to seek external funding, and encourage the Department to continue to seek increased external funding, especially for supporting graduate students, both through faculty grants and through supporting graduate student applications for all internal and external awards. I am glad to hear that the Department is emphasizing course planning principles that emphasize the strategic goals of the Department and Faculty and I remind the Department that any plan to systematize course releases requires the approval not only of the Chair, but also of the Dean.

Overall, I see the Department as making progress on the action plan developed in response to its last external

review. I congratulate the Department on this progress and encourage the Department to continue to seek improvements according to its plan and to continue to seize opportunities as they arise.

Faculty Dean (signature)



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a long horizontal stroke that ends in a small loop.

Date

November 6, 2025

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION:	Department of Political Science; Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP); Senate
FROM:	Paul Kingsbury, Associate Vice-President Learning & Teaching and Alice Campbell, Educational Developer, Centre for Educational Excellence
RE:	Department of Political Science Educational Goals Mid-cycle Report
DATE:	December 10, 2025

The Department of Political Science has recently submitted its Educational Goals (EG) mid-cycle report to SCUTL. The report was reviewed and approved by SCUTL along with the below guidance, which was also informed by your External Review mid-cycle report.

The Department's Educational Goals assessment plan is thorough and far-reaching, encompassing undergraduate and graduate programs. We appreciate that direct assessment of student learning will be preceded by detailed, across-the-program analysis of the curriculum as it is planned, and as it is enacted in practice, to ensure that the program as it is delivered is cohesive. We note that Department members have recently made changes to their classroom assessments, moving away from long essays to focus on assignments that have real-world applicability. This is driven by the emergence of Artificial Intelligence and attending to students' concerns about their career pathways. Similarly, the Department is to be commended for thoughtfully working to align its undergraduate curricular offerings with the competencies outlined in the BC Future Skills framework.

We note that you plan to also attend to students' program-level experiences, as well as to conduct direct assessment of their learning – to ensure that the curriculum is working as intended.

At the undergraduate level, it appears that this assessment will focus on EG 2, "skills-based engagement that ready students for real-life situations." It is understandable that, at this juncture, you have not yet been able to specify the scope and scale of that assessment (all 400-level courses?). Your mapping exercises may help you to identify some specific skills, courses, and classroom assessments to home in on. At the graduate level, it appears that this assessment will focus on EG 1, and whether student work in core courses demonstrates mastery of research design and method.

Your overall plan is ambitious, which is understandable as you are looking ahead to your self-study. As you begin to carry out your Educational Goals assessment, staff in the AVPLT portfolio are well equipped to support you and want to help ensure it is meaningful and manageable for the Department. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with Alice Campbell (alice_campbell@sfu.ca) or Paul Kingsbury (avplt@sfu.ca) for guidance or support.

Mid-Cycle Assessment Plan Reporting Template

Unit: Political Science

Contact Person: Sanjay Jeram (sjeram@sfu.ca)

Date: October 8, 2005

This template is designed to help units report on their Educational Goals Assessment for the mid-cycle reporting period. *(Textboxes will expand as you type)*

- 1) Who were the members of your Educational Goals Assessment team? Please outline who has been involved in the assessment.

Andy Hira (outgoing Chair); Sanjay Jeram (incoming Chair); Clare McGovern (Undergraduate Chair); Eline DeRooij (Graduate Chair)

- 2) Did your unit revise or update your Educational Goals and/or your Curriculum Map? Please outline any changes you made.

No.

- 3) Did you change any aspects of your Assessment Plan from your Action Plan? Please outline any changes you made.

For the undergraduate goals, we supplemented the existing Assessment Plan with a curriculum mapping exercise (see Educational Goal 1). We have further developed the plan to survey undergraduates, by linking survey questions to the BC Future Workforce Framework. This reflects our students' concern with linking their studies to career pathways (see Educational Goal 2). Finally, we have added focus groups to the quantitative survey planned for Educational Goal 3.

4) Please use the table below to outline the assessment you have done to date. Add or delete any rows as needed.

Educational Goal 1: UG Goal #1: Develop subject expertise and methodological competence through our curriculum		
Description of Assessment Method(s):	Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:	What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?
<p>A review of course syllabi to ensure they reflect the core structure and content of our curriculum, providing evidence that core disciplinary knowledge and methodologies remains central to our teaching mission.</p> <p>When did you collect the data? Collection and analysis to begin in September 2026.</p>	<p>A systematic analysis is planned ahead of the next external review. Preliminary insights from a sample of syllabi for required courses highlight the Department’s strengths in Canadian and comparative politics, international relations, public policy, and methodology. To enrich the curriculum, we have introduced new courses that expand our coverage of the Global South, with a particular emphasis on South Asia. Although resource constraints have limited the availability of theory courses, committed faculty and sessional instructors continue to provide meaningful options for students pursuing this area of study.</p>	<p>We offer a well-rounded Political Science program that introduces students to the major subfields of the discipline, while emphasizing the Department’s core strengths and academic orientation. Political Theory remains a required course at the 200-level; however, upper-division offerings in this area are currently limited. One potential solution is to explore PHIL courses that may be suitable for POL students seeking advanced study in theory.</p> <p>Students interested in the Global South can access relevant courses through International Studies (IS) and other units within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). Expanding the number of courses taught by CFL faculty across all levels would further support students in developing both subject-matter expertise and methodological skills central to the program’s goals.</p>
Educational Goal 2: UG goal # 2: Promote skills-based engagement that ready students for real-life situations		
Description of Assessment Method(s):	Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:	What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?
<p>Many of our faculty have been involved in politics through consulting, field research, and professional practice. They integrate these experiences into their teaching by designing assignments that reflect real-world contexts. We will assess to what extent, and how effectively, these assignments facilitate the transfer of practical skills to students.</p>	<p>A systematic analysis is planned ahead of the next external review. Initial findings indicate a departmental shift away from traditional long-form essay assignments toward more practical formats such as simulations, policy briefs, presentations, and shorter written tasks. In response to the increasing influence of AI, faculty are taking a range of</p>	<p>Faculty across the Department have been gradually rethinking assessment practices in response to evolving expectations and the changing demands of the labour market. Our alumni represent a valuable, yet underutilized, source of insight into how we can better support students in</p>

<p>When did you collect the data? Collection and analysis to begin in September 2026.</p>	<p>approaches. Some faculty are piloting assignments where students learn to use LLMs in a critical and transparent way. Conversely, many instructors continue to rely on in-class assessments. This approach aligns with the belief that the ability to apply knowledge under pressure remains a highly valued skill in the workforce. Additionally, some faculty have adopted a balanced approach, combining take-home and in-class assignments to foster adaptability and resilience among students. We continue to have conversations about the impact of AI on pedagogy across the Department. We believe that this diversity of approach is a sensible one, given the rapid changes in technology and our students' lives, and is in line with the current (Aug 2025) draft guidance from the SFU Working Group on Teaching and AI.</p>	<p>making successful transitions into the workforce. One example is an instructor's educational research project which interviewed alumni who are now at law school. This project generated insights into the skills and content that are useful for a JD program – which are being fed back into course design within the Department's Justice and Law stream. The Department has begun efforts to strengthen alumni engagement, fostering connections between graduates, current students, faculty, and staff. It is essential that we pursue this initiative with purpose and energy, enabling us to confidently promote the practical value of a POL degree alongside its role in cultivating engaged and informed citizens.</p>
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Educational Goal 3: UG goal # 3: Foster an inclusive learning environment that values diverse perspectives, promotes tolerance, and strengthens a sense of community

<p>Description of Assessment Method(s):</p> <p>Assessment will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods. A standardized survey targeting upper-division students will be complemented by focus groups to explore how students perceive inclusivity and community within our program.</p> <p>When did you collect the data? Collection and analysis began in Summer 2025 and will continue.</p>	<p>Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:</p> <p>The first round of surveys and focus groups included broad questions that only indirectly addressed issues of community and inclusivity. The findings reveal that students are enthusiastic about having more opportunities to connect with peers and faculty through events and informal interactions. While their primary concern is receiving a high-quality education and preparing for future career opportunities, they also place significant value on a socially supportive learning environment. Overall, students regard the Department as a space where diverse perspectives are actively explored and debated.</p>	<p>What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?</p> <p>Our faculty has made meaningful efforts to engage with the Political Science Student Union (PSSU), which has in turn sparked more events and strengthened the sense of community among POL majors. Introducing cohort-building opportunities at the lower-division level could further boost participation in departmental activities and generate enthusiasm among FASS students, positioning POL as a compelling program choice. The Department is participating in two new programs where cohorts will be an important feature: the SFU-Exeter Advanced Law Program (beginning Fall 2026) and the PPE Major/Honours Program (anticipated Fall 2027). Additionally, it is important for the Department to actively promote values of community, diversity, and reconciliation through its communications. Establishing a shared understanding among faculty regarding their</p>
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responsibilities in these areas could serve as a strong foundation for consistent and inclusive messaging.

Educational Goal 4: Grad Goal #1: Strong knowledge base of the range of analytical and epistemological approaches and methods in political science

Description of Assessment Method(s):

-Assessment of course syllabi of POL 800, 801, 802 and 803 and of MA and PhD project papers/theses by Graduate Chair/Committee.

-Within-course assessment by instructors.

-Participation in Departmental methods workshops and attendance at methods summer schools.

When did you collect the data?

Data has been collected since 2023 and will continue until the external review.

Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:

This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review. POL 800 is required for all MA students and POL 801 for all PhD students. Both MA and PhD students are required to take one of 802 or 803. Together, these courses provide a strong knowledge base of the range of analytical and epistemological approaches and methods in political science, which students subsequently apply in their MA Project papers or MA/PhD theses.

Funding has been provided for students to attend methods summer schools. 2025 also saw the first Essex Summer School courses in Social Data Analysis taught at SFU, in which several of our graduate students participated.

What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?

We aim to offer POL 801 once every two years, but with the retirement of Professor Dobuzinskis it is unclear who will be able to take on the course moving forward. We are currently considering how to ensure the learning objectives of this course will be met in the future. Options are to find another instructor or to ensure relevant material is covered in other courses / through other means.

With restrictions on funding, it will be a challenge to continue funding methods summer schools for our students.

Educational Goal 5: Grad Goal # 2: Familiarity with the literatures, and ability to understand and conduct research in two of the major fields of study offered by the Department

Description of Assessment Method(s):

-Assessment of MA and PhD field exams/project papers/theses/comprehensive exams by Graduate Chair/Committee.

-Within-course assessment by instructors.

When did you collect the data?

Data has been collected since 2023 and will continue until the external review.

Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:

This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review. MA students are required to complete elective courses from at least two of the Department's five fields of study, and PhD students are required to take two comprehensive exams in different subfields.

The Graduate Program Chair ensures these requirements are being met when assessing Annual Progress Reports, so that early intervention can occur in case they are not.

What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?

For the Graduate Program we developed a set of "Principles for Graduate Course Scheduling" to ensure that we consistently offer required courses and courses in the different fields. We are satisfied that we are meeting this goal, and will continue to do so.

Educational Goal 6: Grad Goal #3: Professional and personal development

<p>Description of Assessment Method(s):</p> <p>-Student participation in Department and professional panels and conferences, including Department professional development workshops; student participation in co-ops.</p> <p>-Exit survey of graduate students (self-assessment)</p> <p>When did you collect the data? Data has been collected since 2023 and will continue until the external review.</p>	<p>Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review. We saw a record number of graduate students attending academic conferences during the 2023–24 academic year; however, due to the recent budget constraints, we have returned to a more competitive funding model. Despite this shift, we continue to offer regular funding opportunities to support student participation in conferences.</p> <p>We have organized several professional development workshops within the Department, but student participation remains a challenge for these voluntary workshops.</p>	<p>What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?</p> <p>We are yet to conduct an exit survey. As we do not have a cohort program, one challenge is that we only have a small number of students graduating each term (1-2). As such, and given current staff workloads, ensuring there is consistency in collecting and analyzing such a survey is challenging.</p>
<p>Educational Goal 7: Grad Goal # 4: Skills and attitudes for instructional success</p>		
<p>Description of Assessment Method(s):</p> <p>-Student instructional skills development through participation in SFU and Department instructional skills workshops; experience as tutor marker, TA, and/or instructor.</p> <p>-Course instructor assessment of TAs.</p> <p>When did you collect the data? Data has been collected since 2023 and will continue until the external review.</p>	<p>Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review. The TA Training Workshop has continued over the last few years. TA attendance and engagement have been high and have helped to build a strong support network between experienced and new TAs.</p>	<p>What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?</p> <p>There are some inconsistencies between instructors in the level of in-course training and support they give to TAs (for example there is variation in the amount of guidance given on grading papers). In the run-up to the external review, we will begin conversations between CFL on consistent support for TAs. We will also look at providing support and training for new sessional instructors (particularly if they are our own graduate students).</p>
<p>Educational Goal 8: Success in early dissemination and publication of academic work</p>		
<p>Description of Assessment Method(s):</p>	<p>Describe Key Findings, Analysis and Interpretation:</p> <p>The PSSU journal has published a wide range of high-quality undergraduate work, covering legal and policy analysis,</p>	<p>What improvements have been made, or potential improvements considered, as a result of this assessment?</p>

<p>-Systematic collection of data on students' conference attendance and publications, including the PSSU's journal for undergraduate research</p> <p>-Exit survey of graduate students.</p> <p>When did you collect the data? Data has been collected since 2023 and will continue until the external review.</p>	<p>International Relations, comparative and Canadian politics. Several of the student authors have presented their work at undergraduate and graduate conferences, and have gone on to graduate programs (in Political Science, Law, and other disciplines). As the journal is student-run, there have been periods of high activity, followed by periods where the journal is not published. This is the result of inevitable shifts in students' availability and the many other demands on their time. The current PSSU Executive is putting a lot of time into publicizing the journal to current students, and into editorial work.</p>	<p>The Undergraduate Committee will discuss whether faculty can provide ongoing support to the journal; however, we do not want to undermine the student-led nature of the journal, nor its editorial independence. We will therefore discuss with the PSSU whether they would welcome faculty support, and models for useful student-faculty collaboration.</p>
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5) Please use the table below to update your assessment plan for the coming period before your next External Review. Add or delete any rows as needed.

Educational Goal 1: UG goal #1: Develop subject expertise and methodological competence through our curriculum			
<p>Description of Assessment Methods:</p> <p>A review of course syllabi to ensure they reflect the core structure and content of our curriculum, providing evidence that core disciplinary knowledge remains central to our teaching mission. The Undergraduate Committee is planning a curriculum mapping exercise (building on existing Learning Tracks) to show the linkages between Lower Division and Upper Division courses.</p>	<p>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</p> <p>A consensus among the assessors that sufficient teaching time is being spent on the core curriculums across the fields of expertise in our Department (e.g., IR, Canadian/Comparative Politics, Theory).</p> <p>The curriculum mapping exercise will identify examples of how Upper Division courses use the key knowledge, theories and methodological skills gained in Lower Division courses. We expect this information to be useful in students when planning their program.</p>	<p>Is this direct or indirect?</p> <p>Direct</p>	<p>When do you plan to collect the data?</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p> <p>The curriculum mapping is planned for the 2025-2027 academic years.</p>

<p>Educational Goal 2: UG goal # 2: Promote skills-based engagement that ready students for real-life situations</p>			
<p>Description of Assessment Methods:</p> <p>We will assess to what extent, and how effectively, course assignments facilitate the transfer of practical skills to students.</p> <p>We will also assess a selection of research papers and policy analyses written by our students in 400-level classes to assess whether students are applying their Political Science knowledge and skills to solve contemporary problems.</p>	<p>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</p> <p>A diverse array of course assignments should support students in developing the skills, competencies, and attributes outlined in the B.C. Future Workforce Framework (https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/skills-future-workforce/competencies). These assignments should foster critical thinking, encourage the use of both new and existing knowledge to solve contemporary problems, and promote decision-making and performance-monitoring strategies for individuals and organizations. A balanced mix of individual and group assignments is essential. Group work cultivates vital social competencies such as awareness, sensitivity, persuasion, negotiation, and coordination. Individual assignments demonstrate that each student has understood core Political Science content and developed skills research, analysis and communication. They also show that the student has the self-motivation and organization to succeed in the workplace.</p>	<p>Is this direct or indirect?</p> <p>Direct</p>	<p>When do you plan to collect the data?</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p>
<p>Educational Goal 3: UG goal # 3: Foster an inclusive learning environment that values diverse perspectives, promotes tolerance, and strengthens a sense of community</p>			
<p>Description of Assessment Methods:</p> <p>Assessment will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods. A standardized survey targeting upper-division students will be complemented by focus groups to explore how students perceive inclusivity and community within our program.</p>	<p>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</p> <p>Positive responses to survey questions exploring students' perceptions of inclusivity and community in their POL courses will be interpreted as indicators of success. Complementary focus group discussions will offer deeper insights into students' classroom experiences, particularly in relation to diversity, tolerance, and community-building.</p>	<p>Is this direct or indirect?</p> <p>Indirect</p>	<p>When do you plan to collect the data?</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p>
<p>Educational Goal 4: Grad Goal #1: Strong knowledge base of the range of analytical and epistemological approaches and methods in political science</p>			

<p>Description of Assessment Methods:</p> <p>Assessment of course syllabi of POL 800, 801, 802 and 803 and of MA and PhD project papers/theses by Graduate Chair and Graduate Program Committee. Within-course assessment by instructors.</p> <p>Participation in Departmental methods workshops and attendance at methods summer schools.</p>	<p>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</p> <p>Course syllabi reflect a range of analytical and epistemological approaches and methods in political science, and the project papers/theses show a mastery of research design, qualitative and quantitative methods.</p> <p>Within-course student improvement based on pre- and post- tests.</p> <p>Participation in workshops and summer school</p>	<p>Is this direct or indirect?</p> <p>Direct</p>	<p>When do you plan to collect the data?</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p>
<p>Educational Goal 5: Grad Goal # 2: Familiarity with the literatures, and ability to understand and conduct research in two of the major fields of study offered by the Department</p>			
<p>Description of Assessment Methods:</p> <p>Assessment of MA and PhD field exams/project papers/theses/comprehensive exams by Graduate Chair/Committee.</p> <p>Within-course assessment by instructors.</p>	<p>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</p> <p>The field exams/project papers/theses/comprehensive exams demonstrate knowledge of the key debates in at least one subfield.</p> <p>Students have taken courses in at least two subfields.</p> <p>PhD students have taken comprehensive exams in two different Subfields.</p> <p>Within-course student improvement based on term papers.</p>	<p>Is this direct or indirect?</p> <p>Direct</p>	<p>When do you plan to collect the data?</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.</p>
<p>Educational Goal 6: Grad Goal #3: Professional and personal development</p>			
<p>Description of Assessment Methods:</p> <p>Student participation in Department and professional panels and conferences, including professional development workshops; student participation in co-ops.</p> <p>Exit survey of graduate students.</p>	<p>What would indicate that students had met the EG?</p> <p>Participation levels in related events</p> <p>Discussion with alumni</p>	<p>Is this direct or indirect?</p> <p>Direct</p>	<p>When do you plan to collect the data?</p> <p>This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next</p>

			external review.
Educational Goal 7: Grad Goal # 4: Skills and attitudes for instructional success			
Description of Assessment Methods: Student instructional skills development through participation in SFU and Department instructional skills workshops; experience as tutor marker, TA, and/or instructor. Course instructor assessment of TA.	What would indicate that students had met the EG? Experience verified.	Is this direct or indirect? Direct	When do you plan to collect the data? This will be done as part of the self-study process before the next external review.
Educational Goal 8: Success in early dissemination and publication of academic work			
Description of Assessment Methods: Systematic collection of data on students' conference attendance and publications. Exit survey of graduate student.	What would indicate that students had met the EG? ^[OBJ] Number of conference presentations and publications by graduate students.	Is this direct or indirect? Indirect	When do you plan to collect the data? Annually

6) How do you plan on sharing your findings within your unit?

These actions will be undertaken by instructors in collaboration with the Chair, Undergraduate and Graduate Chairs, and departmental staff prior to the next external review. All findings will be shared with the Department for feedback before finalizing the self-study. Based on this input, we will review and, if needed, revise our educational goals.

7) Assessment Timeline

Next External Review: 2028