

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY | FACULTY OF ARTS, Political
Science**
Curriculum Review Report

July 2025

Executive Summary

The University of Calgary's Political Science program is one of the largest and fastest-growing majors on campus. Graduates of the University of Calgary's political science program can presently be found in the highest levels of Canadian federal and provincial politics as well as the academic, public, non-profit, and private sectors in Canada and around the world. As a consequence of innovative curriculum changes over the past five years, our political science program boasts the most extensive sequence of undergraduate research methods training on offer anywhere in Canada. These courses, together with extensive substantive training in political theory, comparative politics, international relations, Canadian politics, and Indigenous politics, make for a rich and diverse undergraduate curriculum.

With more than 800 majors, an exceptionally high major-to-faculty ratio of 37, and limited TA support, our program's continued growth amidst serious resource constraints has also necessitated a careful review of our curriculum. We focused particular attention on the question of *sequencing* – building a curriculum that not only provides political science majors with a rich variety of course offerings, but also appropriately guides our majors through their political science training in a sequence from disciplinary introductions to subfield introductions to subfield specialization and finally to advanced seminars. We also explored our department's approach to sessional vs. continuing faculty assignments, the advantages and disadvantages of “cross-listed” upper-year seminars, and options for TA allocation in a context of high enrolment and resource constraints. Finally, to ensure that our students are equipped to take full advantage of the University of Calgary's strategic commitments to undergraduate research experiences, we investigated our curricular offerings related to research methods and course-based research experiential learning.

To develop data-informed answers to each of these questions, we collected a variety of qualitative and quantitative data, including a full curriculum mapping, a pan-Canadian jurisdictional scan, off-the-shelf and customized data from Office of Institutional Analysis, subfield-specific faculty engagement sessions, and NSSE data. In addition, inspired by political science research on deliberative democracy, we designed a unique “deliberative mini-public” – a five-hour deliberative student assembly involving thirty randomly-selected political science majors – to better understand the experiences and priorities of undergraduate students in our program.

Overall, our findings indicate that despite resource constraints and an exceptionally high major-to-faculty ratio, the undergraduate program in political science at the University of Calgary is performing well and in very high demand. Our recommendations therefore fall into the category of “gentle renovation” rather than “back-to-the-studs reconstruction.” We recommend that the political science program restructure its 200-level course offerings to provide students with a strong basis of knowledge in the content and practice of political science at the *disciplinary* level – including a pilot project involving an innovative team-taught version of our introductory political science course (POLI 201). We also recommend a series of changes to prerequisites and course offerings to better structure students' movement through the program. Alongside these more formal changes, we recommend that the Department of Political Science initiate a basket of informal processes – including an annual “faculty office hours” event and new website and email communication to majors – to ensure that students are equipped with the information they need to design a curriculum that equips them for success and aligns well with their interests and goals.

In addition to these sequencing-related recommendations, we include several minor recommendations related to our other guiding questions. These include clear annual communication with students about undergraduate research opportunities, increased flexibility in TA allocations to align with curricular goals and instructor-specific pedagogical techniques, and careful allocation of resources to provide a rich array of senior seminars even when resources are constrained. We include an action plan and communication timelines for implementation of these recommendations.

Curriculum Review Process and Mandate

At the University of Calgary, curriculum review is a “staff-led critical examination of each undergraduate program for the purpose of optimizing the learning outcomes of that program.” In 2024-2025, the Department of Political Science in the Faculty of Arts carried out a curriculum review for its POLI (Political Science) major.

Curriculum Review Team

This curriculum review was led by the Undergraduate Program Director and Undergraduate Committee in the Department of Political Science:

- Jack Lucas, Professor. Curriculum Review Lead and Undergraduate Program Director.
- Mark Baron, Associate Professor (Teaching). Curriculum Review Team Member and INTR Program Director.
- Ian Brodie, Professor. Curriculum Review Team Member.
- Regina Cochrane, Associate Professor. Curriculum Review Team Member.
- Susan Franceschet, Professor. Curriculum Review Team Member and Honours Program Director.
- Maureen Hiebert, Associate Professor. Curriculum Review Team Member.
- Lisa Young, Professor. Curriculum Review Team Member.

Gavin Cameron (Associate Professor) joined the Curriculum Review Committee in July, 2025, after having taken over as Undergraduate Program Director in the Department of Political Science.

The curriculum review committee received generous support from the 2024-25 Co-Chairs of the POLI Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee – Erica Rayment and Daniel Voth – who advised on the development of Program Learning Outcomes and Guiding Questions and participated in the Student Deliberative Assembly. The review team also wishes to thank Patti Dyjur (Educational Development Consultant, TI) and her team for valuable training, Jean Gomes (OIA) for data access assistance, and members of the Registrar’s Office Student Information Data Hub (RO-SIDH) for providing extremely helpful customized datasets. We are also grateful to Lisa Hughes (Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts) for providing GAT data and to Melissa Boyce (Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts) not only for providing a great deal of valuable data but also for helpful feedback and timely information throughout the review and report drafting process. Finally, we are also grateful to our colleagues in the Department of Political Science and to participants in our Student Deliberative Assembly for their willingness to participate in this curriculum review process.

Scope of the Review

The Department of Political Science administers three programs: POLI (Political Science), INTR (International Relations), and INDG (International Indigenous Studies). This curriculum review focuses exclusively on the POLI program. A curriculum review for the INTR program is in progress and will be reported separately.

Action Plan

1. Move POLI 397 (Introduction to Research Methods) to the 200 level (i.e. POLI 297).	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move POLI 397 (Introduction to Research Methods) to the 200 level (297)
Timeline	Submission to CARC in Spring 2026; active in July 2027.
Responsibility	Undergraduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report

2. Delete POLI 279 (Politics of the Global South) and combine its content with POLI 283 (Issues and Trends in World Politics), making POLI 283 into a course whose content is strongly distinguished from 300-level subfield introductory courses in POLI.	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delete POLI 279 (Politics of the Global South) • Revise the course description of POLI 283 to incorporate content from POLI 279 and clearly distinguish the course from other courses
Timeline	Submission to CARC in Spring 2026; active in July 2027.
Responsibility	Undergraduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report

3. With support from the Taylor Institute on Teaching and Learning (or other appropriate units), pilot a “team-taught” version of POLI 201, with three POLI 201 sections developed and co-taught by one representative from each of Canadian Politics/Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory.	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify instructors for three-year POLI 201 team-teaching pilot • Apply for funding from Taylor Institute SOTL grants in 2025-2026 round to support additional TA support
Timeline	Identification of instructors in Fall 2025. Funding application early 2026. Pilot course Fall 2026.
Responsibility	Department Head identify instructors. Instructor team then apply for Taylor Institute SOTL funding.
Rationale	See pp. 11-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report

4. Revise course prerequisites such that students enter 300-level subfield introductory courses with a strong general understanding of the substance and methods of political science.	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add POLI 201 as a prerequisite for POLI 321 (Politics and Government in Canada), POLI 326/328 (Western Political Thought), POLI 359 (Introduction to Comparative Politics), and POLI 381 (Introduction to International Relations) • Add POLI 297 (Introduction to Research Methods) as a prerequisite/corequisite for POLI 321 (Politics and Government in Canada), POLI 326/328 (Western Political Thought), POLI 359 (Introduction to Comparative Politics), and POLI 381 (Introduction to International Relations)

Timeline	Submission to CARC in Spring 2026; active in July 2027.
Responsibility	Undergraduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report

5. Revise prerequisites such that students in 400-level and 500-level courses have a strong basis of subfield knowledge prior to taking more specialised subfield-specific courses.

Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add POLI 321 (Politics and Government in Canada) as a prerequisite for the following courses: POLI 433, POLI 521, POLI 531. • Add POLI 326 and/or 328 (Western Political Thought) as a prerequisite for the following courses: POLI 413, POLI 415, POLI 519. • Add POLI 359 (Introduction to Comparative Politics) as a prerequisite for the following courses: POLI 470, POLI 471, POLI 554, POLI 569. • Add POLI 381 (Introduction to International Relations) as a prerequisite for the following courses: POLI 479, POLI 481, POLI 543.
Timeline	Submission to CARC in Spring 2026; active in July 2027.
Responsibility	Undergraduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report

6. Revise course codes to ensure that POLI courses are offered at the appropriate stage in students' undergraduate careers.

Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move POLI 369 (Govt & Poli of Middle East) to the 400-level or, if similar 400-level content is already available, delete one of the two courses. • Move POLI 371 (Govt and Poli of Africa) to the 400-level or, if similar 400-level content is already available, delete one of the two courses. • Move POLI 379 (The Politics of Development) to the 400-level or, if similar 400-level content is already available, delete one of the two courses.
Timeline	Submission to CARC in Spring 2026; active in July 2027.
Responsibility	Undergraduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report

7. To provide excellent specialized learning in each political science subfield, add a subfield-specific 500-level "Topics" seminar for each subfield.

Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add POLI 5XX (Advanced Seminar in Canadian Politics) • Add POLI 5XX (Advanced Seminar in Comparative Politics) • Add POLI 5XX (Advanced Seminar in International Relations)
Timeline	Submission to CARC in Spring 2026; active in July 2027.
Responsibility	Undergraduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report

8. Consolidate 200-level course offerings to minimize the number of sections offered while retaining in-class learning and meeting required minimum number of 200-level seats.

Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise planning activity in subfield summer “caucus meetings” • Revise course scheduling
Timeline	Implement in 2026-2027 academic year.
Responsibility	Department Head
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 3 Post-Review Progress Report.

9. Provide students with a “menu” of course sequences in political science using the website and email communication, including not only formal fields but also departmental areas of focus, such as Gender and Politics, Indigenous Politics, and Security Studies.

Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPD and Undergraduate Committee Develop “Menu” of Sequences • Academic Program Specialist updates website / sends email
Timeline	Develop content in Fall 2025. Send email and update website prior to enrolment opening date in Winter 2026.
Responsibility	UPD and POLI Academic Program Specialist.
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report.

10. Prior to enrolment opening day each year, organize a “Political Science Office Hours” event each year, in which as many faculty as possible hold open-door office hours in the department to provide students with informal advice on course sequences, information on their own upcoming course offerings, and general advice and mentorship.

Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Head and UPD select date for “Office Hours” event • Department Head emails faculty members • Faculty members attend “Office Hours” event
Timeline	Select date in Fall 2025. Send email and update website prior to enrolment opening date in Winter 2026.
Responsibility	Department Head and UPD
Rationale	See pp. 13-19.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report.

11. Provide POLI majors with an “applied research menu” of course offerings each year, outlining courses which involve research methods training and/or applied or experiential research techniques.

Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Head provides UPD with list of next year’s course offerings • UPD solicits information about in-class research experiences / activities • UPD communicates information on research experiences / activities to APS • APS includes information in annual “menu” email
Timeline	Develop content in Fall 2025. Include in email prior to enrolment opening date in Winter 2026.
Responsibility	Department Head, UPD, Academic Program Specialist.
Rationale	See p.20.
Evaluation	Year 1 Post-Review Progress Report.

12. To ensure consistency of content and approach in introductory courses, prioritize teaching of all disciplinary and subfield introductory courses (POLI 201, POLI 297, POLI 321, POLI 326, POLI 328, POLI 359, POLI 381) by continuing faculty rather than sessional instructors.	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize continuing faculty teaching in “subfield caucus” summer meetings • Department Head prioritizes continuing faculty for introductory courses
Timeline	Ongoing (implementation Fall 2027)
Responsibility	Department Head
Rationale	See pp. 20-22.
Evaluation	Year 3 Post-Review Progress Report.

13. Enable creative instructional and assessment techniques by empowering the Graduate Program Director to depart from a per-student TA allocation protocol when appropriate.	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPD communicates with faculty members prior to TA allocation
Timeline	Implementation Winter 2026
Responsibility	Graduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 22-24.
Evaluation	Year 3 Post-Review Progress Report.

14. Prepare an advocacy memo for the Dean of the Faculty of Arts providing (a) data on POLI GAT funding trajectories over the past decade, (b) a description of the changes that these funding trajectories have necessitated, (c) a description of the ways that increased GAT resources would support student learning, and (d) alignment between increased GAT support in POLI and the Faculty of Arts’ more general strategic objectives.	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Review Lead shares available data with GPD and UPD • UPD and GPD draft memo and share with respective committees for approval • UPD and GPD share memo with appropriate Faculty of Arts contacts
Timeline	Memo shared by UPD and GPD with relevant Faculty of Arts contacts (Associate Deans and Dean) by Spring, 2026.
Responsibility	Undergraduate Program Director and Graduate Program Director
Rationale	See pp. 22-24.
Evaluation	Year 3 Post-Review Progress Report.

15. Explore the advantages and disadvantages of cross-listed 500-level seminars for graduate students in an upcoming POLI graduate curriculum review.	
Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to Graduate Curriculum Review as “Guiding Question”
Timeline	POLI Graduate Curriculum Review (2025-2026).
Responsibility	Graduate Program Director
Rationale	See p. 24.
Evaluation	POLI Graduate Curriculum Review