

AGENDA ITEM NO:

**UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
Academic Programs Committee
FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

PRESENTED BY: Roy Dobson: Chair, Academic Programs Committee

DATE OF MEETING: May 21, 2015

SUBJECT: M.A. Project Option in Political Studies

COUNCIL ACTION: For information only

SUMMARY:

The M.A. Project Option in Political Studies was approved by the Academic Programs Committee at its meeting on April 22, 2015.

The Department of Political Studies proposed a project-based Master of Arts degree program to complement their current thesis-based offering. With a M.A. project option, the department of Political Studies will be more competitive with peer institutions within the U15 group. They will also be able to attract and shepherd more graduate students, as the workload on faculty is significantly less when supervising a project-based student. Currently the department sees a number of qualified applicants who they are not able to admit because of faculty capacity to supervise more graduate students pursuing a thesis-based program. The department foresees more students selecting the project-based program, which would result in a decrease of students pursuing an M.A. thesis, but an overall increase in M.A. students.

The introduction of a project-based M.A. program will also allow students to complete their degrees in one year, which has not been the case for most M.A. thesis students. Timely completion of degrees allows students more certainty about the cost of the program and better planning for future employment or continued education.

In terms of the quality of the program and the students admitted therein, there would be no difference between the M.A. project option and the M.A. thesis option. Students in both programs would take the same courses, following the same standards, but project-option students would take more classes. The major research project that they conduct would be, but would not explore the topic with as much depth as a thesis. The project-option requires more credit units of coursework, as well (24 cu in the project option vs 12 cu in the thesis option) to ensure the programs are of equal intellectual rigor.

ATTACHMENTS:

- M.A. Project Option in Political Studies Proposal

May 3, 2015

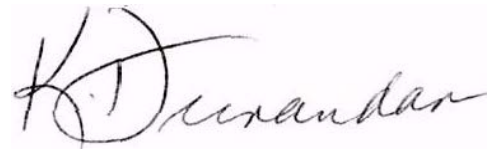
Ms. Kelly Clement
Assistant to the Associate Dean,
Graduate Academic Affairs Committee
and Graduate Programs Committee
College of Graduate Studies and Research
University of Saskatchewan

Dear Ms. Clement:

Please find attached my revisions, as *per* the requests of the Academic Programs Committee (APC) to the proposal for a project-based Master of Arts by the Department of Political Studies.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Deonandan", is written over a light pink rectangular background.

Dr. Kalowatie Deonandan
Associate Professor
Chair, Graduate Studies
Tel: 306-966-2167/1666

To: Dr. Dionne Pohler, Chair, Graduate Programs Committee, CGSR

CC: Dr. Trever Crowe, Associate Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR)
Dr. Joseph Garcea, Head, Department of Political Studies

From: Dr. Kalowatie Deonandan, Graduate Chair, Department of Political Studies

Date: May 3, 2015

Re: New project-based option for the Master of Arts in Political Studies

The Department of Political Studies is pleased to respond to the request for additional information made by the Executive Committee of CGSR at its January 6, 2015 meeting regarding the Department's proposal to implement a major research project (MRP) option in its Master of Arts Program in Political Studies.

Below I have responded to each of the queries raised by the Committee.

- 1. *The Executive Committee asked that the Department clarify whether the intent of the new project-based option is to increase enrolment and/or improve program completion times.***
 - ***If it is to increase enrolment, are there sufficient faculty resources available in the Department of Political Studies to supervise increased numbers of students?***

As stated in the original earlier submission, the Department has three objectives in proposing the MRP stream: 1) to expand the options available to students, 2) to increase its enrolment, and 3) to ensure that students complete within the allotted time frame.

Firstly, the Department would like to provide students with more choices. Not all students are interested in the thesis option as, for many, the MA is their final academic degree. The majority of our students seek employment after they complete their MA with only a few choosing to go on to a Ph.D. As such, for the former group, the MRP option has greater appeal. Should they wish to return to academia later and pursue a Ph.D., the MRP-based MA does not preclude this.

Further, this MRP proposal is in alignment with graduate options available both within many U15 universities and also within cognate units at the U of S. Of the ten U15 institutions in the table below, four (McGill, Ottawa, Queen's and Western), all with PhD programs in Political Science/Studies, offer an MRP-based MA degree. For Queen's and Ottawa, the MRP is the only option.

Importantly, it should be noted that at these four institutions the course requirements are either 3 credit units **less** than that at U of S (i.e., McGill) or 6 credit units **less** than that at the U of S (i.e., Ottawa, Queen's and Western). (The U of S criterion for minimum number of credit units for the MRP stream is set by the College of Graduate Studies and Research). Further, Alberta, McMaster and Toronto offer course-based options in their Political Science/Studies MA programs. For the University of Toronto, the course-based MA is the only available option. These course-based degrees require a maximum of 24 credit units of courses. The exception is McMaster, which requires 18 credit units and a Comprehensive Exam.

Within the University of Saskatchewan, the Department of Sociology, a cognate Department in the College of Arts and Science, also has an MRP Program, while the Department of Philosophy has a course-based MA.

Comparisons with Sample U15 Universities

UNIVERSITY	PROGRAM	THESIS OPTION	COURSE OPTION	MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT OPTION
University of Alberta	Political Science	YES	YES 24 credit units courses in total	NO
University of British Columbia	Political Science	YES	NO	NO
University of Calgary	Political Science	YES	NO	NO
Dalhousie University	Political Science	YES	NO	NO
McGill University	Political Science	YES	NO	YES 21 credit units of Courses and an MRP
McMaster University	Political Science	YES	YES 18 credit units and a Comprehensive Exam	NO
University of Ottawa	Political Science	NO	NO	YES 18 credit units of Courses and MRP
Queen's University	Political Studies	NO	NO	YES 18 credit units of Courses and an MRP
University of Toronto	Political Science	NO	YES 24 credit units courses in total	NO
Western University	Political Science	YES	NO	YES 18 credit units of Courses and an MRP

Secondly, another goal of the proposal is to increase enrolment and accommodate more students from the large pool of qualified applicants , thus expanding educational opportunities for more students. At present, there is a very high demand for the program (from both national and international students). However, the Department already accepts a significant number of applicants (12 new students in each of the past two years) and it is not presently in a position to increase the acceptance rate because its capacity, in terms of faculty complement, to undertake the supervision of more theses is limited. However, supervising an MRP is less onerous and all faculty members in the unit are willing to increase their supervisory responsibilities to accommodate MRP candidates. The differences between and MRP and a thesis-based program are described below in the response to the Committee's next query and they helps explain why faculty are able and willing to accommodate MRP supervision.

As for available faculty to undertake supervision, currently, in addition to its regular full-time complement, the Department has several members in emeritus or other capacities who are willing to supervise the MRPs, but who are not available to supervise theses. All members listed below are presently supervising thesis-based students. Additionally, though they are not listed, colleagues in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School (JSGS) of Public Policy have also supervised Political Studies MA students when there has been a convergence of interest between the student and the faculty member. For the 2015-16 year, Dr. Ken Coates of JSGS, for example, has already committed to supervising the thesis of an incoming student with whom he shares a common research interest.

Faculty Available for Supervising MRPs

Last Name	First Name	Category
Bell	Colleen	Grad Faculty
Berdahl	Loleen	Grad Faculty
Deonandan	Kalowatie	Grad Faculty
Garcea	Joseph	Grad Faculty
Hibbert	Neil	Grad Faculty
Holroyd	Carin	Grad Faculty
Kordan	Bohdan	Grad Faculty (STM)
McGrane	David	Grad Faculty (STM)
Poelzer	Greg	Grad Faculty
Smith	Charles	Grad Faculty (STM)
Romanow**	Roy	Professional Affiliate
Retired		
Story	Donald	Adjunct Professor
Michelmann	Hans	Professor Emeritus
Wheeler	Ronald	Adjunct Professor

**Roy Romanow is a Professional Affiliate in the Political Studies Department. As such, he can be a regular member on an advisory committee, and he can teach graduate-level courses. He can also supervise students with the permission of CGSR and if he serves as a co-supervisor. He is currently co-supervising graduate students and has taught a graduate course this past year (and in the last several years).

Thirdly, the final intent in introducing the MRP is to help ensure that students finish their MA degree within the one-year allotted time period, as currently many take longer. By having to do courses which are regularly scheduled and a smaller research project, students in the MRP stream will be able to work systematically towards finishing the degree. Timely completion will also greatly reduce the financial pressures on them. While costs are a major concern to all students, they are an even greater burden to international students whose tuition rates are higher and whose capacity for employment are more restricted due to factors such as visa restrictions.

2. The Executive Committee asked if the proposed MRP is to improve program completion times, do faculty in the department have an interest in conducting research with these students or would a course-based program provide a better option?

The MRP option does not preclude research collaboration between faculty members and MRP students. In some ways, research collaboration leading to publications can be facilitated by an MRP as the project could be written as a journal article from the start, rather than as a traditional thesis that has to be revised significantly if publication is pursued. Also, during the discussions in the Department regarding the MRP option, faculty members were unanimously in noting that they definitely did not rule out research collaboration with MRP candidates.

In terms of the quality of training provided to students in the MRP versus those in the thesis stream, there is no difference. Both groups will be taking the same courses and following the same standards. With the MRP, however, students have to take a larger number of graduate courses, 24cus as opposed to 12cus for the thesis. The MRP project is of equal intellectual rigour, but not explored in as much depth as a thesis, is shorter in length and not subject to defence before a committee. (An average paper at the graduate level in Political Studies is approximately 25-30 pages. As such, MRP students will have written three such papers extra by having to take 12cu of courses, in addition to their major project. While the project will be 40 pages in length, the Department's limit for theses is 75 pages. Hence, MRP students will have greater breadth of training while thesis-based students will explore a project more in depth.

It should be noted that the U o S requirements for an MRP is 24cu whereas U15 universities almost universally require only 18cu for this stream and 24 for a course-based program. Should the possibility exist for the Department to choose a 24cu requirement for a course-based stream, then it would certainly be open to considering this option in the future.

3. *The Executive Committee asked whether the Department's intent is to discontinue the thesis-based program.*

The Department fully intends to keep its thesis-based program. But like several of its U15 counterparts (and cognate Departments within the University such as Philosophy and Sociology), it would like to enhance its program offerings at the graduate level by including an MRP option.

4. The Executive Committee states that it would like to see a comparison of the proposed project-based option and the existing thesis-based program to highlight how they differ.

Below the differences between a thesis and an Major Research Program are described.

Thesis Based Program	MRP
12 cu courses + Thesis	24 cu Courses + Major Essay
Thesis Proposal Defence	None
Thesis Defence	None
75+ pages Thesis	40 pages Major Research Project
Multiple drafts and Revisions of Proposal and of Each Chapter	Fewer Drafts
3 Faculty Committee Members + External and Chair of Defence	1 Faculty
Field Research Possible	No Field Research
Ethics Approval	No Ethics Approval

5. Members of the Executive Committee found the rationale provided to introduce the program contradictory. The project option is presented as a means to attract and accommodate larger numbers of graduate students, and the proposal admits that the Department of Political Studies has limited capacity to supervise students. The goal of attracting more students without the capacity to supervise them is inconsistent. Please clarify.

As noted above, the Department would like accommodate many more of the qualified students who apply. It believes it can do this with a program that has both a thesis stream and an MRP one. From the perspective of faculty members, the MRP is significantly less challenging than a thesis to supervise, as explained above, and hence they can undertake supervision of a larger number of students by having a mix of those doing a thesis and others doing an MRP.

Also, the Department will be expanding its course offerings through greater collaboration with cognate units. In particular, the Department is presently in the process of formalizing its cooperation with the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School. This agreement will allow students registered in both the Department of Political Studies and Johnson Shoyama to take courses available in either unit and have these count towards their degrees. This will benefit both the Department and JSGS.

Finally, the Department has discussed this proposal with the Associate Dean of Social Sciences, Dr. Lawrence Martz, and it has his full approval.