

DISCIPLINE PROFILE - POLITICS

Nature of Discipline

a) Level or type of qualification:

All academics in Politics are expected to have Hons BA level 1 or 11/1 (or equivalent) and a research degree in progress. A completed MA(Hons) or PhD is usual, but other evidence of research ability through substantial and well regarded publications, may be acceptable.

b) Ways in which knowledge is advanced:

Academics in politics contribute to the advancement of knowledge through scholarship or research in one or more of the sub-disciplines of politics variously defined to include political sociology, political history, political theory, political philosophy, public policy, public administration, Australian politics, regional studies, comparative politics and international relations.

The advancement of knowledge in any one of these sub-disciplines may take a number of forms, including the systematic documentation of certain facts and figures (election results, for example, or the biographical details of parliamentarians), translation and/or editing of important texts, the preparation of research guides (including bibliographies) or the writing of a political chronicle. More highly valued, however, are contributions which take the form of a critique or reassessment of existing work within the discipline; the testing of accepted views or competing accounts of significant political phenomena; the construction of new theories, whether of an empirical or normative kind, and fieldwork to assess the implementation of public policies.

c) Special features:

Joint projects and authorship are common in Politics, and jointly authored work should be treated as seriously as individually authored work, provided that the candidate's own contribution to the joint work is clear.

Teaching Contributions

a) Teaching styles and loads:

Each academic in Politics is expected to do as much of the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching as any other member of the discipline. Typically this means (above level A) co-ordinating two courses per year and offering at least 8 contact hours per week (lectures, tutorials, seminars).

Applicants for promotion to any grade are not only expected to have done their fair share of the teaching but to have done it well. Not all teachers are equally effective at all levels. But the applicant should be a very good

teacher at some level - whether at first year, at an advanced undergraduate or honours level or at the postgraduate level.

Good teaching in Politics means a number of things: being thoroughly prepared; providing students with manageable reading lists that tackle particular topics from various points of view; presenting arguments and ideas in an engaging manner, perhaps with the aid of a variety of formats (debates, games, submission writing, hypotheticals); being prepared to discuss issues with students; helping students develop skills relevant to their research, organising and writing-up of material; commenting in detail on students' written work; and returning assignments promptly.

b) Postgraduate teaching:

Honours and postgraduate enrolments are a small percentage of undergraduate numbers and fall unevenly across the range of teaching expertise. Responsibility for supervision of postgraduate research (MA Hons, PhD) fall predominantly on senior staff members, Senior Lecturers and above.

c) Curriculum and course/unit innovation:

These are important in a 'topical' discipline such as Politics, where traditional areas of instruction must be maintained and ones of contemporary relevance offered as staff resources permit. Comparative approaches, and initiatives in team-teaching and assessment and class restructuring are all encouraged in an understaffed discipline with substantial undergraduate enrolments, especially at 100 level.

Research and Scholarship

a) Forms of dissemination:

The results of scholarship and research are normally made available through books and monographs, reports (including those from consultancies), articles in academic journals (in politics or a cognate discipline), or conference papers.

The appropriate vehicle is the one most likely to reach the appropriate audience. The 'international community of scholars' is the appropriate audience in some cases. In other cases, especially where the subject matter is of more limited interests (as is typically the case with Australian material) the appropriate audience may well be a more localised one.

Members of the discipline normally publish their scholarship and research in a wide range of journals - some exclusively academic, some not; some specialist to the sub-discipline, some not; some refereed, some not. In addition, of course, research results or the fruits of scholarly pursuit often see the light of day in books or monographs. So far as refereed journals are concerned, it should be noted that:

- i) refereeing practices vary widely (not all refereeing is 'blind'; some journals use external referees, others use members of their editorial committee; journals with a back-log of articles already accepted can afford to be tougher than those which are short of copy);
- ii) the refereeing practices adopted by editors of journals - not to mention publishers of books - are never entirely clear (no journal publishes a description of how it decided between conflicting referees' reports; and no book publisher discusses the trade-offs between scholarly and commercial considerations); and, above all;
- iii) the difference between articles which appear in refereed and unrefereed journals may have nothing to do with differences in their quality (but reflect instead differences in methodological hang-ups of journals, their political biases or frequency of publication).

Academics in Politics thus do not always set great store by whether or not an article appears in a refereed journal or refereed book. Among Australianists in particular, some of the most widely cited work, including some of the most highly regarded work, produced by Australian political scientists, is not work that (on any reasonable strict set of criteria) could be said to have been refereed. Conversely, much of what is published in prestigious journals leaves hardly a trace. What matters, above all, is not where the material is published but the quality of what is published.

b) Quantification of publications:

In assessing the comparative weight of publications, it should be borne in mind that it is easier to produce work and have it published in certain sub-disciplines than in others.

c) Place of various types of publications:

See a) above for the place of 'mainstream' publications. So far as consultancies and commissioned work are concerned, the discipline (represented by the Australasian Political Studies Association) does not as yet have a code of conduct. However, it seems reasonable to insist that such work not be undertaken at the expense of one's other duties - especially teaching. It also seems reasonable to expect that the knowledge gained through consultancies informs one's subsequent teaching and/or research. Ideally, commissioned research should be published. In any event, work that cannot be inspected by the candidate's referees or by members of a promotion committee cannot be weighed in the candidate's favour.

d) Place of other contributions:

Some academics in Politics present research findings in commissioned or feature articles and appearances in the mass media. These products usually replicate more scholarly contributions, in which case they do not add to a

candidate's contribution to scholarship (although they could represent a contribution to the community). If mass-media contributions do not replicate scholarly output, they are to be assessed on their merits. This is also true of purely creative works, which are also rare.

Contributions to the University and Community

a) Administration:

The discipline expects its staff to carry - in addition to the administrative tasks associated with their own units - some part of the administrative load associated with the discipline as a whole and to deal effectively and fairly with administrative problems. Staff may make themselves available from time to time for a range of positions including the position of head of discipline, convener, honours co-ordinator, postgraduate co-ordinator, supervisor of postgraduate programs.

The refusal to become involved in administrative tasks affecting Politics would raise a question about the applicant's interest in the welfare of the discipline; administrative involvement at less than a reasonable level of competence would raise a question about the candidate's thoroughmindedness or, again, a question about the candidate's commitment to the discipline.

In common with other members of the School, Politics staff are expected to serve from time to time on School committees and ad hoc working groups, as well as to represent the School or 'cluster' on University committees.

b) Consultancies, etc.:

See section c) under Research and Scholarship. Occasionally, members of the discipline perform educational, artistic, cultural, or other community or official consultancy work, both paid and unpaid. Sometimes this lies outside the individual's principal field of expertise.

c) Professional associations etc.:

Discipline members sometimes take important roles in professional associations and also community work.

Specific Profiles.

a) Assistant Lecturer (level A):

The requirements for appointment at this level will vary. As it is now a career position, with the possibility of conversion to tenurable status, a lecturer A will be evaluated on his or her contribution and potential in the teaching and research programs of the discipline. They must be prepared to supervise, where appropriate, at honours and MA (Pass) level and contribute to the administration of large introductory units. To convert to a continuing

position lecturers A must give evidence of the quality of their teaching and have demonstrated research ability.

A candidate for initial appointment at the bottom of the lecturer A scale, will usually have a good honours degree and be enrolled in a PhD program with some evidence of satisfactory progress. From point 6 and above on the scale lecturers A may be lecturers-in-charge of undergraduate units. Appointees at this level are expected to have a completed PhD or publications.

b) Lecturer (level B):

A candidate for promotion to lecturer will be expected to demonstrate originality and initiative in research. She or he will normally demonstrate this in a highly regarded PhD thesis or a publication record that includes items of strong scholarly merit. Reputation among contributors to the field of study in question outside the University is an advantage.

An associate lecturer may have few opportunities to design and co-ordinate units, and absence of this activity is not an obstacle to promotion. But a candidate must have demonstrated self-sufficiency and a high level of competence in leading undergraduate tutorials and seminars, marking and assessing students' work, developing their skills and dealing with their normal academic problems. Competence in lecturing and delivering papers to fellow academics in conferences and colloquia is a distinct advantage.

A candidate will be expected to have contributed to the life of the discipline and the School by participating in the meetings of each, and perhaps by undertaking minor administrative tasks.

It is an advantage if a candidate has participated in the affairs of the discipline beyond the bounds of the University, for instance by giving conference papers, attending conferences and joining a professional body.

c) Senior lecturer (level C):

All the expectations on Politics staff referred to in general above apply to candidates for promotion to senior lecturer. A candidate will have a substantial research record by the standards of the sub-discipline(s) in which she or he is active. For reasons already given no formal measures as to what constitutes such a record can be established. But at this level candidates should be able to adduce evidence of a scholarly reputation for originality or conceptual creativity, or both. Success in attracting external research funds is meritorious when it leads to substantial output. A good deal of valuable research in the discipline, however, may require little or no funding, and absence of grants is not a point against candidates.

An applicant for a senior lectureship will have a creditable teaching performance (see above) which will also include creativity in unit design, and may include initiatives in establishing or revamping programs such as

honours and postgraduate course work programs. A candidate should normally have made an input into the discipline's teaching at various academic levels, including either honours or postgraduate teaching, or both.

Lecturers may have supervised MA Honours or PhD theses. Opportunities to do so, however, are unevenly spread across sub-disciplines. There are few enrolments in political theory in the relevant programs, and research-degree enrolments in area studies are commonly held back by lack of material available in Australia. Moreover, postgraduate research students tend to gravitate towards more senior staff.

A candidate for promotion would normally be expected to have acted competently in some administrative capacity or capacities over and above unit administration, within the discipline or its programs.

Lecturers may have served the discipline in a number of ways. They may have joined at least one of the professional bodies associated with the discipline and made themselves available to play an active role within it; acting as a referee for the discipline's journals and for grant-giving bodies like the Australian Research Council; editing or served on the editorial boards of journals associated with the discipline; and presented papers at conferences sponsored by the discipline or by its members.

d) Associate professor (level D):

In addition to fulfilling the general expectations on all Politics staff, a candidate for promotion to associate professor is expected to have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of knowledge in one or several fields of study. She or he will have adduced evidence of an international (or strong national) reputation for having done so. As with the discipline in general, no ready made formula to measure the quantity or quality of research output is appropriate. But applicants are expected to have published outstanding work since their promotion or appointment to their senior lectureships.

An applicant would usually have supervised MA Honours and PhD theses, but her or his contribution in this area may have been inhibited by the uneven spread of postgraduate enrolments across the subdisciplines.

It is an advantage if the candidate has displayed intellectual leadership at Macquarie. This may have taken one of several forms: actively shaping the discipline's direction and priorities; helping in the recruitment of staff; encouraging the work and career prospects of other staff; or contributing in highly valued ways to staff student-staff colloquia.

A candidate for promotion at this level will have continued to serve the discipline in one (or more) administrative capacity over and above normal unit administration. He or she will also normally have undertaken some administrative work for the School or University.

It is normal for senior staff to have served the discipline outside the University in a number of ways. These might include joining at least one of the professional bodies associated with the discipline and making oneself available to play an active role within it; acting as a referee for the discipline's journals and for grant-giving bodies like the Australian Research Council; editing or serving on the editorial boards of journals associated with the discipline; presenting papers at conferences sponsored by the discipline or by its members; and examining and co-supervising theses written at other universities.