

# Political Science Association



# Academic Guidebook



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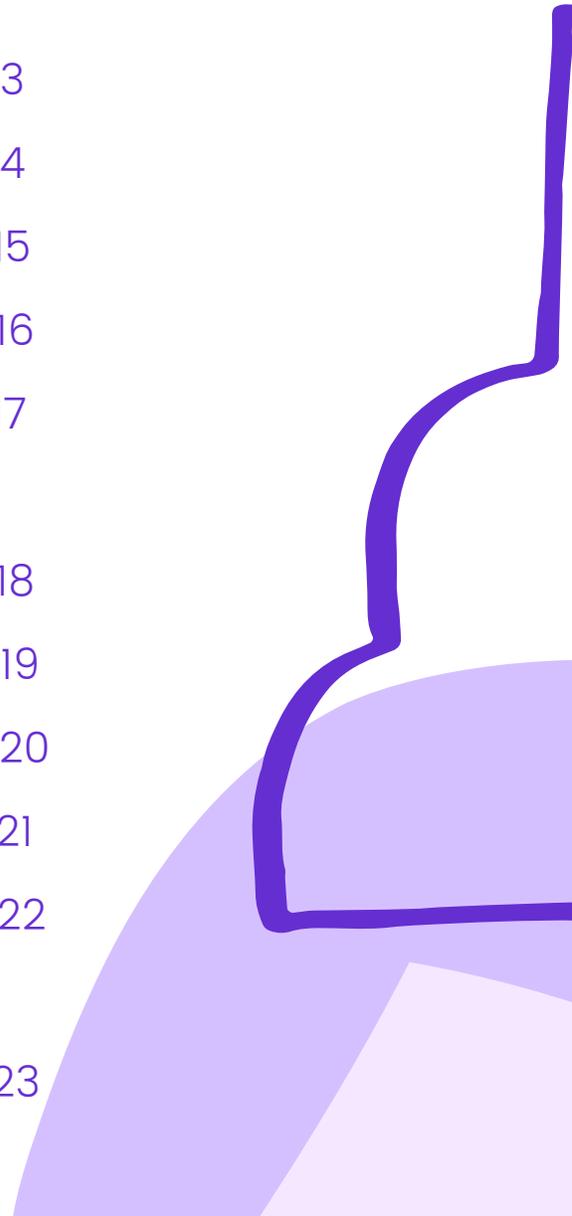
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# Welcome to the Professional Development Guidebook!

Dear reader,

As VP Academics of the Political Science Association, I wanted to welcome you to our Professional Development Guidebook. I really hope that you will find this guidebook helpful, and that it will be an important stepping stone in your academic and professional development. I encourage you to embrace as many opportunities as possible in this regard, and I wish you all the best in your future studies and career!

Best wishes!

Clare Littlechild

VP Academics of the Political Science Association



# **PART 1:**

# **Meet The Team**

This section includes information and advice from some of our executive team members!  
We hope that you'll enjoy getting to know us.

# PSA Executive Team Profiles

Below, our executive team share their stories, as well as some of their tips for other students.



## Victoria Brown

Co-President

3rd Year

Honours Specialization in Political Science  
& Minor in French

### What is your favourite resource available through Western?

Western Career Centre. Often overlooked, the career centre is a great guide to growing professionally, obtaining resumes advice, and finding internship opportunities. Students can meet one-on-one for personalized support for any career-related topic.

### Favourite Study Spot on Campus? Law Library!

### Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

1. Get to know your professors! Having a good relationship with your professors will make it easier to approach them during office hours, ask them to supervise a thesis, or request a letter of recommendation for grad school. Professors can aid as a source for an on-campus job, summer internship, research opportunity, or serve as a mentor on your academic journey. Establishing a close relationship with your professors makes it easier to reach out for support!

2. Get involved in undergrad! Getting involved in undergrad will advance your academic journey and help you make lasting connections that will be beneficial down the road on your career path. Students can get involved on campus by joining clubs related to their area of interest, seeking leadership roles, or attending exciting events to discover internship opportunities or meet potential recruiters/mentors! By networking and creating relationships through these avenues, students can make friends or find a mentor to help guide them on their academic journey. These connections will help you grow as an individual socially, academically, or professionally no matter whom you meet

Don't be afraid to throw your hat in the ring, put yourself out there and apply for that leadership role! You never know what could happen!



## Amanda Gutzke

Co-President

3rd Year

Honours Specialization in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, with a concentration in Political Science

What is your favourite resource available through Western? Impact Experience

Favourite Study Spot on Campus? Taylor Library if I have to be on campus, but I prefer studying at my house

Have you taken advantage of any cool opportunities at Western?

In first year I signed up for Impact Experience (formerly known as alternative spring break). During my spring reading week I volunteered with habitat for humanity and connected with the London community. It was a great way to get outside of the "Western bubble."

Are you currently working in a field related to Political Science?

I recently completed my research internship at the Centre for Urban Policy and Local Governance. I learned about the position through a professor. During my time as a research assistant I examined local governance in Canada. For my final project I research municipal election results and I presented my findings at conferences and competitions.



Clare Littlechild

VP Academics

3rd Year

Honours Specialization in Global Justice,  
Minor in Women's Studies

What is your favourite resource available through Western?

It's a tie between International Learning and Program Counselling!

Favourite Study Spot on Campus?

I really like Weldon, especially the quiet spaces on the upper floors!

Have you taken advantage of any cool opportunities at Western?

In first year I went on a Community Engaged Learning Trip to Holguín, Cuba with the Spanish Department, which was amazing! I am also a Fulbright Killam Fellow and am currently taking up this award at Wellesley College in the spring of 2022. I was nominated for this award through the International Learning office at Western, and have received so much support from Program Counselling and the International Learning office throughout the entire process.

Are you currently working in a field related to Political Science?

I am currently working as a Research Consultant at Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada, which is an NGO that works to protect children from sexual exploitation. I've been able to work on a number of really interesting and important projects through this position, including on a report that was presented to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Relations in the House of Commons, as well as a project funded by the Oak Foundation. I have also worked as a research assistant for two established lawyers on the publication of a law textbook on anti-SLAPP proceedings, which is set to be published by Irwin Law later this year.

Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

I would really encourage you all to aim high and to set realistic and organized goals along the way. I also can not say this enough, but you should absolutely get involved in student organizations or extracurriculars during your undergraduate degree. I am involved in a number of on-campus and off-campus groups at Western, and it has been one of the most fulfilling parts of my undergraduate experience.



**Anushka Goswami**

VP Communications

3rd Year

Honours Double Major in Political Science  
and Criminology with Minor in American  
Studies

What is your favourite resource available through Western?

Western's Writing Support Centre! Any essay, letter to professors, personal statements, the Writing Centre is a great resource, it helps students gain a professional overview on their writings.

Favourite Study Spot on Campus?

Univeristy College! I love the modern but still historic elements of the building and its close to all other buildings.

Have you taken advantage of any cool opportunities at Western?

During my first year I had the amazing opportunity to get involved with Western Law's Litigation Course as a volunteer and second year as volunteer advisor. Each year the Litigation Captsion Course at Western Law is looking for volunteers to help 2L students! The experience allowed me to intersect my interest of policy making and its legal implications. The Community Engaged Learning at Western is also a wonderful opportunity that allows students to gain real world experience. My time with Good Neighbours Canada allowed me to conduct extensive research regarding gap areas in developing nations.

Are you currently working in a field related to Political Science?

Summer of 2021 I had the opportunity to work with my Member of Parliament with their outreach campaign and equity diversity program. The opportunity allowed me to engage in meaningful discussions and local policy decisions.

Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

I cannot stress this enough but reach out!! Reach out to community leaders, professors, council members, PSA executives. There are a lot of engagement opportunities which are not broadly advertised so reaching out will allow you to not only become involved but also learn what about political science do you like most! Don't be afraid to talk to your professors, they are only looking to make your academic experience more meaningful. And lastly, allow yourself to explore different career and learning options. Don't limit yourself to one field, explore multiple options so you are aware of your interests!



Azaad Gill  
1st-Year Delegate  
1st Year  
Political Science

What is your favourite resource available through Western?

Academic counselling drop in hours

Favourite Study Spot on Campus?

Social Science Center

Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

Take things one step at a time!



Raphael Taisne  
1st-year Delegate  
1st Year  
Economics

What is your favourite resource available through Western?

Writing Support Center

Favourite Study Spot on Campus?

Taylor Library Stacks

Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

As a first year, I would say to get involved in many clubs in first year and profit from those experiences, do not hesitate to reach out to professors for academic help/questions/whatever the case and do it at your earliest convenience, and make use of western's many resources such as the writing centre and etc.



**Cynthia Huo**

**3rd-year Delegate**

3rd Year

Honours Specializaion in Political Science, Minor in  
Economics

What is your favourite resource available through Western?

Academic counselling drop in hours

Favourite Study Spot on Campus?

The law library! The high ceilings and banker's lamps create the perfect study environment.

Are there any cool opportunities that you've taken advantage of at Western?

I took part in the Western Undergraduate Summer Research Internship (USRI) this past summer and it was an incredible experience I could not recommend enough! For those of you who may not know, USRIs provide undergrad students with a paid research experience, where you work alongside a faculty mentor on a research project that you present at an exhibition at the end of the summer. I had the opportunity to work with Professor Alcantara, and learned so much about the process of researching and putting together a journal article for publication.

Are you currently working in a field related to Political Science?

(not current but I thought it still would be relevant) During the past two summers, I interned at a criminal defence law firm in downtown Toronto. I started as a summer student, and this past summer I worked as a law clerk and was able to fully immerse myself in the legal field. Through (virtually) attending court for various appearances and trials, I saw what effective advocacy looks like firsthand and through my day-to-day work I learned so much about the ins and outs of the criminal justice system. Since I plan on attending law school after graduation, this was an amazing opportunity that reaffirmed my interest in the legal profession.

Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

Go to office hours! Getting to know my professors has been a highlight of my undergrad experience thus far - as terrifying as it may be at first, trust me, it's worth it. I've been able to take advantage of opportunities that I wouldn't have even known existed otherwise (such as the USRI) and it truly gives more meaning to the work I do for my courses.



**Abigail Sobin**

**3rd-year Delegate**

3rd Year

Honours Specializaion in International Relations,  
Minor in Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict  
Reconstructions

What is your favourite resource available through Western?

The Write Place at King's

Favourite Study Spot on Campus

International and Graduate Affairs Building

Are there any cool opportunities that you've taken advantage of at Western?

Community engaged learning is a wonderful program at Western that gives students the opportunity to work with non-profit organizations in the community for grades! There are many political science courses which offer this option. It's a great way to get involved in the community and also earn some experience!

Are you currently working in a field related to Political Science?

Last year I had the opportunity to volunteer for a MPP candidate in London. It was a great learning experience. Very often political candidates are looking for students to help them in their campaigns. So if your looking to get started in politics, start there!

Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

Apply to everything and anything! You never know who will call you back for an interview or offer you a position.

Any other info you might want to share?

Be kind to other people, but also remember to be kind to yourself. It's hard to find the right balance between school, work and a social life but it's essential to getting good grades and staying healthy!



Luke Van Der Hoff

4th-year Delegate

4th year

Honours Double Major Political Science and History

What is your favourite resource available through Western?

Impact Experience

Favourite Study Spot on Campus?

TG. Emmett Cardinal Carter Library

Do you have any academic/career tips for PSA members?

It's important to get involved in extra curricular activities, do some volunteer work, and try and find work in your field of study, especially if you want to get into grad school. As well, try and develop good relationships with your professors, most importantly your upper year profs, because strong academic references can make a big difference in your chance at getting into the grad program you want most. Finally, take advantage of the wide availability of information regarding grad school and law school. Attending the zoom seminars can really help you understand the process and they are very helpful with answering any questions you might have.

A lot of students will solely rely on using the internet for citations and sourcing when writing their papers. Yet, I think this isn't always the best approach. If you go to the library, you will easily find dozens of books on whatever subject you are researching. The librarians are very helpful and can point you in the right direction if you need help as well. I have found being able to sit down with the physical texts makes it much easier to find the information you might need and you are allowed to take as many books out from the library you want and to keep them for months at a time. Take advantage of the rows upon rows of information available at your finger tips.



## **PART 2:**

# **Alumni Highlights**

This section includes information and advice from two  
Political Science alums!



Mackenzy Metcalfe  
Class of 2020  
Honours Specialization in International  
Relations

What program were you in at Western and when did you graduate? How were you involved with the Political Science department?

Involved in Social Science Student's Council, University Students' Council, the Social Science Soph Team and various local political campaigns.

What are you currently doing in your professional life?

I am currently pursuing a Master of Political Management at Carleton University and working as a Research Intern at Summa Strategies.

Do you have any advice or guidance for Political Science students?

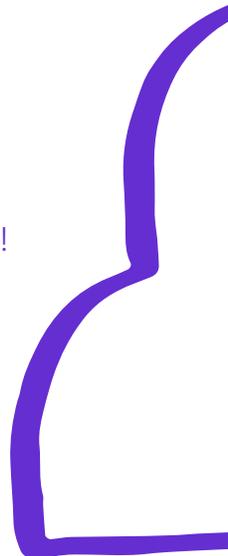
Don't be afraid to get involved in activities outside of Western's campus. Some of the best professional experiences I have had came from volunteering for political candidates in the London community. Politics is a meritocracy, work hard and people will notice.

What's next for you?

I plan to continue living and working in Ottawa in government relations.

Any other info or final words that you might want to share:

Always happy to chat to anyone interested in getting involved in government relations!





Anne Campbell  
Class of 2021  
Political Science

What program were you in at Western and when did you graduate? How were you involved with the Political Science department?

I recently graduated in Spring 2021 with a BA in Political Science. During my last two years at Western, I was able to do research with a professor in the Political Science department.

What are you currently doing in your professional life?

I am currently a Parliamentary Intern through the Parliamentary Internship Programme in Ottawa. Through the non-partisan experience, I work with two different MPs from two different political parties.

Do you have any advice or guidance for Political Science students?

Do not feel like you have to have your life figured out. Taking a year off to work after I graduated was one of the best decisions I could have made for myself! Whether it comes to internships in the summer or post-grad life, do not feel like your path has to be linear. Just remember to try different things, take classes that interest you, and invest in your friendships, it'll help you figure out who you want to be and help you find what makes you happy (:

Any other info or final words that you might want to share

Make sure to reach out if you have any questions about post-Western Political Science grad life.

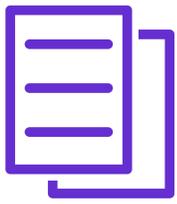
Editor's Note: If you're interested in getting in touch with any one of our executive team members or alums, please reach out to us on Instagram at @psawestern



## **PART 3:**

# **Excelling in Undergrad**

This section highlights a number of resources, tips, and important pointers to help you succeed in undergrad and become an ideal candidate for employment and graduate education.



# Building A Strong CV

Something that many people begin doing as they enter university is building a CV or "curriculum vitae". A CV is a brief, written summary of a person's education, career, experiences, and qualifications; CVs are used for both employment and graduate school, so having a strong one is the first big step in preparing for your future.

## Here are a few important things to remember when building your CV...

Your CV should be extensive, and should include your:

- education
- past and present employment
- extracurriculars and community involvement
- volunteer hours
- past awards and accolades
- publications
- special training and qualifications
- any other information that you think is essential to your employment/education

When listing your skills and experience on your CV, be sure to highlight skills and experience which are relevant to the opportunity to which you are applying.

A CV is typically 1-3 pages in length. Be sure to check the CV requirements for any job or program that you might be applying to.

It is usually best to save and submit your CV as a .pdf file, as opposed to a Word document. This way, you can make sure that your file will not have any unwanted formatting changes.

It can be helpful to have multiple friends and family members peer review your CV. You want to be 100% sure that there are no spelling or grammar errors!

# Planning Your Path

Building a strong CV in order to get a job or get into graduate school is a big deal! It is the first big step towards the workforce and senior academia. Most, if not all, employers and graduate schools like to see that applicants are hard-working, well-rounded people who are involved in their communities. Below is an important chart on a number of things to consider as an undergraduate with big goals.

## Things to Consider

Determine the GPA that you want to maintain and work towards maintaining it.

Is community/campus involvement important to you? If so, try to get involved with student leadership, organizations, and/or volunteering as early as possible. Consistency is important!

If you are interested in any scholarships, awards, or special programs, make sure to do your research and be aware of all important deadlines.

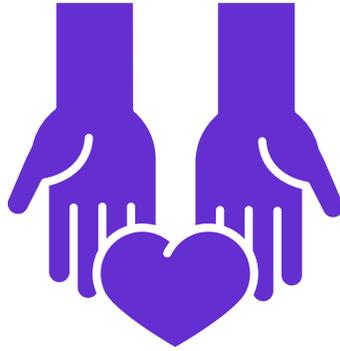
Will you need to take any graduate school testing? If so, start thinking about how long it will take you to study and when you should start. More info on grad school testing can be found in Part 3.

Does your future employer or grad school place an emphasis on publication experience? If so, be sure to research publication opportunities. There are many great journals available at Western, including our Political Science journal, The Social Contract.

Be sure to check in with an academic counsellor or other helpful Western staff member to make sure that you are meeting all necessary requirements for your ambitions.

# Getting Involved

Getting involved in your community is not only a valuable asset for your CV, but also a fulfilling and rewarding experience. Many university students cite their extracurricular experiences as their favourite parts of their undergraduate careers, and there are so many opportunities to get involved at Western. Below are some of the best ways to get involved in your campus community.



**Check out the USC Clubs page for information on hundreds of organizations – there's something for everyone!**

<https://westernusc.ca/clubs/>

**Check out local volunteering opportunities (or remote ways to volunteer and give back to the London community, or your home community)**

<https://volunteerlondon.ca/volunteer-opportunities/>

**Take a look at Western's volunteering resources.**

[http://career.uwo.ca/explore\\_connect/volunteering\\_leadership.html](http://career.uwo.ca/explore_connect/volunteering_leadership.html)

**Consider getting involved with student government.**

<https://westernusc.ca/>

**If you don't find something that interests you, considering starting your own initiative, business, or club. This shows great initiative!**

# Western's Academic Resources

**Western Social Science Academic Counselling**

<https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/>

**Western Student Experience – Impact Experience**

<http://cel.uwo.ca/students/impact/index.html>

**Western Libraries**

<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/index.html>

**Western Student Experience – Career Education**

<http://career.uwo.ca/>

**Western's Employment Resource Centre**

[http://career.uwo.ca/prepare/resume\\_cv/werc.html](http://career.uwo.ca/prepare/resume_cv/werc.html)

**Western International Learning**

[https://international.uwo.ca/learning/go\\_abroad/index.html](https://international.uwo.ca/learning/go_abroad/index.html)

**Department of Political Science – Student Resources**

[https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/graduate/student\\_resources.html](https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/graduate/student_resources.html)

**Western Libraries Research Guides – Political Science**

[https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/graduate/student\\_resources.html](https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/graduate/student_resources.html)

**Department of Political Science – Program Counselling**

[https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_counselling.html](https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_counselling.html)



## **PART 4:**

# **Graduate School**

This section explains the basics of graduate school admissions and applications, and provides some helpful mapping tools to help students start planning their futures in graduate education.

# Choosing A Program

The two main types of graduate programs are Master's degrees and Doctorate Degrees. Read about these below!

## Master's Degrees

A master's degree is a type of advanced academic degree which usually lasts 2 years (length varies depending on school, topic, and country of study). Admission to a master's program generally requires a bachelor's degree, although the preferred academic requirements and major prerequisites vary greatly depending on school and program.



The three most popular types of Master's degrees are Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc), and Master of Business Administration (MBA). There are many topics that you can get a Master's in, such as an MA in Public Policy or an MA in Political Science. Program options vary greatly depending on school, so be sure to explore the admissions and programs websites of any potential grad schools.



Once you've properly researched any potential schools and programs, be sure to research the admission and application requirements and begin thinking about what you'll need to do in order to meet these requirements. For example, you might have to take graduate school testing or arrange for a number of academic references. It's important to not leave these things to the last minute, so once you decide that you want to go to grad school, start mapping out what you need to get done.

# Choosing A Program

## Doctorate Degrees

A doctorate degree is an intensive academic degree that grants one the title "Doctor", such as a Doctor of Philosophy or PhD. A PhD is the most widely known doctorate degree, and, along with a Juris Doctor (JD), these two degrees are the most relevant doctorates to Political Science students.



A PhD is also known as a Doctor of Philosophy and can range anywhere from 3–6 years in length, although some may extend longer than that. A typical PhD in Canada tends to last 4 or 5 years. The process of applying for a PhD has a lot of similarities to the process of applying to a Master's, with the main distinction being that a PhD typically relies more heavily on a research dissertation; many programs require a research proposal for said dissertation as part of your PhD application.



A JD, or Juris Doctor, is different than a Master's or PhD; while it's still a doctorate, it is also considered a professional degree. A Juris Doctor is the degree that one receives after successfully completing law school. Law school applications are different than regular graduate school applications, primarily because a big part of one's admission to law school hinges on their completion of the LSAT, or Law School Admissions Test. Check out the following pages to learn about grad school applications and testing.

# Grad School Applications

Below are examples of the required supporting documents and application components that a typical MA, PhD, and JD would usually require. Please remember that these are only examples and you should refer directly to the website of your prospective graduate school during the actual application process. There is a big range in admissions requirements from school to school.

## Application Example: Master's Degree

- An official copy of your transcript from Western
- 2 to 3 reference letters (referee requirements may vary)
- A statement of intent or personal statement
- A writing sample
- Resume or C.V.
- Potential supplementary essays
- May require a valid GRE/GMAT score, depending on the program

## Application Example: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

- An official copy of your transcript from Western
- 2 to 4 reference letters (referee requirements may vary)
- A statement of intent or personal statement
- A research proposal
- A writing sample
- Resume or C.V.
- Potential supplementary essays

## Application Example: Juris Doctor (JD)

- An official copy of your transcript from Western
- 2 to 4 reference letters (referee requirements may vary)
- A statement of intent or personal statement
- Resume or C.V.
- Potential supplementary essays (these are common for law school applications)
- A valid LSAT (Law School Admissions Test) score, as administered by the [Law School Admissions Council](#)

# Grad School Testing Breakdown

A number of graduate schools – especially law schools – require testing as part of the application process. The details of these tests are outlined below.

## The GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test)

The GMAT is typically used for business school applications (as in, MBA degrees). It is supposed to test the skills that are most important to those planning on working in business. Below is the breakdown of the GMAT. [Click here for further information on the GMAT.](#)

Quantitative Reasoning – 62 minutes  
Verbal Reasoning – 62 minutes  
Integrated Reasoning – 30 minutes  
Analytical Writing – 30 minutes  
Total Exam Time: 3 hours and 7 minutes

## The GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)

The GRE is used as an assessment for a number of graduate programs. Below is the breakdown of the GRE. [Click here for further information about the GRE](#)

Quantitative Reasoning – 70 minutes  
Verbal Reasoning – 60 minutes  
Analytical Writing – 60 minutes  
Research Question Section – 35 minutes  
Total Exam Time: 3 hours and 45 minutes

## The LSAT (Law School Admissions Test)

The LSAT is used as an assessment for law school admissions. It is supposed to test the skills that are most important to the legal profession and indicate success in the first year of law school. [Click here for further information about the LSAT.](#)

Analytical Reasoning – 35 minutes  
Logical Reasoning – 35 minutes  
Reading Comprehension – 35 minutes  
Unscored Variable Section – 35 minutes  
Unscored Written Section – 35 minutes  
\*(note: the written section is administered separately from the rest of the test)  
Total Exam Time: 3 hours and 55 minutes

# Letter from the PSA Team

The PSA Executive team hopes you found this professional development guidebook helpful in your academic and professional journey. As a political science student, it can be difficult navigating post-secondary and finding resources to help overcome various obstacles. We thank our VP Academics, Clare LittleChild, for curating this Academic and Professional Development guidebook, so that every student can be empowered and supported at Western University.

Please feel free to reach out to our association if you have any questions or need supports.

Good luck!

*-PSA Executive Team*

2021/2022

*Connect with us!*



@PSAWESTERN



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**Thank You!**