

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Minutes of the Public Session of the February 25, 2025, Meeting via Videoconference 2:32 p.m. - 4:38 p.m.

PUBLIC SESSION

[Academic Council Committee Agendas, Materials and Minutes 2024-2025](#)

Present:

Steven Murphy (Chair)	Catherine Davidson	Carol Rodgers
Asifa Aamir	Ana Duff	Robyn Ruttenberg
Scott Aquanno	Mikael Eklund	Rozen
JoAnne Arcand	Shanti Fernando	Denina Simmons
Robert Bailey	Jessica Hogue	Gillian Slade
Wendy Barber	Mehdi Hossein Nejad	Peter Stoett
Mihai Beligan	Brenda Jacobs	Joe Stokes
Mary Bluechardt	Les Jacobs	Jemma Tam
Toba Bryant	Hossam Kishawy	Dwight Thompson
Krystina Clarke	Lori Livingston	Shannon Vettor
Amanda Cooper	Carolyn McGregor	Ken Wilson
Nicola Crow	Fedor Naumkin	
	Scott Nokleby	

Staff & Guests:

Kirstie Ayotte (Secretary)	Andrea Kassaris	Darryl Papke
Chelsea Bauer	Alyson King	Melissa Ramirez
Jamie Bruno	Clarissa Livingstone	Diane Tepylo
Stephanie Callahan	Jennifer MacInnis	Sarah Thrush
Lindsay Coolidge	Brad MacIsaac	Lisa Townsend
Jennifer Freeman	Matthew Mackenzie	Becky Tranter
Krista Hester	Kimberley McCartney	
	Christine McLaughlin	

Regrets:

Ahmad Barari	Sayyeed Ali Hossseini	Amy Neil
Nawal Elshamiy	Janet McCabe	Oghenetega
Mitch Frazer	Breanne Mcalpin	(Tega) Ubor

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m. A. Cooper began by sharing her personal reflections and then reading the University's Land Acknowledgement.

2. Agenda (M)

A member requested that item 10e be removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Upon a motion duly made by M. Hossein Nejad and seconded by H. Kishawy the February 25, 2025 Agenda and Consent Agenda including its contents were received and approved as amended.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees back from Reading Week and shared insights from his time in Singapore, where he worked to secure Ontario Tech as a world class leader in nuclear expertise amid growing global interest in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and large-scale reactors. He highlighted exciting partnerships supporting Canadian exports. Additionally, he noted that varsity athletics are in playoff season, with a special mention to the men's Basketball Team competing in the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) semi-final this Saturday in Kingston and encouraged support for the team.

4. Inquiries and Communications

a) COU Academic Colleague Report

R. Ruttenberg-Rozen advised that the most recent meeting focused on graduate studies, highlighting key innovations and challenges. Innovations included the Ontario Principles of Graduate Supervision, expanding graduate micro-credentials, improving the Ontario Visiting Graduate Student program, and the introduction of applied master's degrees at colleges, latter also being an area of concern. Challenges discussed included funding and recruitment pressures, financial constraints affecting research programs, concerns over the international student cap, and the growing impact of AI in admissions, particularly AI-generated reference letters.

J. Stokes clarified that the six college master's programs are still under review by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB). This Board oversees the approval of graduate programs at colleges, private universities in Ontario, and non-Ontario institutions, while universities follow the regular Quality Council process. He noted that this remains a major concern for the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), which has submitted multiple letters to the Board and the Ministry, along with individual university responses, outlining challenges with college master's proposals.

5. Provost's Remarks

L. Livingston recognized Dr. Winnie Sun, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences, for being named one of North America's Top 50 Leaders in Healthcare for 2025. Dr. Sun was honoured for her work in dementia care using virtual reality reminiscence therapy. She also reminded attendees that the Celebrate Teaching Awards nomination deadline is Friday, February 28, with the award ceremony taking

place on March 26 following the Annual Teaching Conference, which will feature keynote speaker Dr. Jessica Riddell from Bishop's University.

a) Senior Academic Administrator Search Update

L. Livingston reported that the Dean of SGPS search is progressing, with the job posting expected soon and interviews anticipated in early May. She also noted that the Renewal Advisory Committee for Dean Rodgers has also met, and confidential feedback on her reappointment is due tomorrow. Feedback can be submitted to the Provost@ontariotechu.ca email.

b) Student Recruitment and Success Update* (I)

L. Livingston highlighted key updates on student retention, support programs, and financial aid. The University's year one to year two retention rate improved from 81% in 2019 to 84%, while the year two to year three rate has risen from 91% to 95%, signaling strong progress in student retention. The Learning Engagement Academic Program (LEAP), which supports students facing suspension, has enrolled 663 undergraduates, with 66% either graduating or remaining enrolled, demonstrating its impact on student success. Additionally, student reliance on OSAP has grown significantly, with a \$13 million increase in funding compared to last year, likely due to higher enrollment, increased financial need, and rising loan amounts. She noted that these trends reflect ongoing efforts to support student retention and financial accessibility.

A question was raised about why the commitment to a student-centric approach in recruitment and retention efforts does not include input from faculty. L. Livingston clarified that while the statement emphasizes valuing student input, it does not exclude faculty and staff perspectives. She noted that the University regularly gathers data from faculty and staff through various initiatives and events, ensuring their insights contribute to decision-making alongside student feedback.

An inquiry was made regarding programs under consideration for paused admissions, and, any planned efforts to enhance recruitment. L. Livingston clarified that the proposed one-year admission pause is not a closure but an opportunity to reassess recruitment and marketing strategies for specific identified programs. The goal during this year is to better understand student interest, refine outreach efforts, and strengthen program appeal for long-term sustainability.

J. Stokes noted that low-enrollment programs should be evaluated beyond numbers, considering structure and student appeal. He highlighted that renaming or repackaging programs has helped institutions attract more students. A pause allows for reassessment and strategic adjustments.

Concerns were raised about the timing of the decision, lack of consultation, and potential long-term impacts on recruitment. Some questioned whether a formal Academic Council process was required. Others warned that suspensions could harm the University's reputation, as seen elsewhere.

L. Livingston responded that discussions on low-enrollment programs have been ongoing for over a year, including Faculty Council presentations. She stressed that running programs with minimal enrollment is financially unsustainable and that the decision was carefully considered.

S. Murphy reaffirmed that these are temporary pauses, unlike what is happening in the current provincial landscape within other institutions.

Further concerns were raised about the impact of program suspensions on program viability. It was suggested that a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted, as small cohorts may have minimal financial impact.

L. Livingston again emphasized that these were program pauses and acknowledged the concerns expressed. She emphasized that many universities are going through this type of process. She urged collaboration among faculty, recruitment teams, and administration to develop strategies for increasing applications to these programs to ensure program sustainability.

6. SMA4 Update

S. Thrush advised that the preliminary final-year SMA3 evaluation shows that the University will be exceeding all performance metrics and corridor enrollment commitments, making us eligible to retain our performance funding and additional funding, depending on other institutions' performance. She added that the additional funding was not a large amount.

With respect to SMA4 by way of follow-up to prior updates she had provided to Academic Council, S. Thrush noted the University retained two institutional metrics from SMA3 as the SMA4 institutional specific metrics. Data validation is currently underway with the Ministry, with SMA4 submission expected by the end of March. She highlighted that some details are still pending as the Ministry has yet to finalize corridor data and that the new funding formula will apply in years three to five of SMA4.

She indicated key changes in SMA4 include a shift in job outcome metrics to focus on domestic students, rather than international. Performance-based funding will increase from 25% in 2025-26 to 40% in the final year of SMA4, with up to \$29.1M at risk if targets aren't met.

S. Thrush confirmed that in December, the bilateral meeting took place with MCU to discuss the metrics, areas of strength, and challenges, with a focus on increasing STEM enrollments. She clarified that the University's focus on STEM/STEAM was emphasized too. Accountability and transparency remain central, and failure to meet reporting compliance could result in a 5% reduction of the University's core operating grant.

Regarding the potential future of university funding and SMAs, the Government's focus is shifting toward expanding STEM enrolments without firm commitment on funding above existing levels. The change in the performance funding from 25% to 40% is a shift in funding share from enrolment to performance, not an increase in total funding. She noted that discussions on the new funding formula for years 3 to 5 of SMA4 are still in early stages, and the Government has yet to complete significant pieces of SMA4. She reported on the ongoing effort to advocate for STEM funding, with Ontario Tech University positioned to be a leader in STEM in anticipation of future funding shifts.

7. Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)

M. Bluehardt advised that the USC met in January to discuss program adjustments and modifications aimed at improving student opportunities.

She noted that many program adjustments made in response to feedback gained from student consultations. These changes aim to provide greater flexibility, more elective options, and pathways to graduation. The recommended modifications also address current educational needs and career readiness, ensuring students are better prepared for future success. Overall, the Committee remains committed to evolving the academic landscape to better serve student needs and industry trends.

a) Major Program Modifications* (M)

- i. Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: New Minor in Nuclear Technology* (M)

M. Bluehardt noted that new minor in Nuclear Technology will be offered to students in various engineering programs, providing a competitive edge for jobs in the nuclear sector, a key employer for engineering graduates.

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by S. Nokleby, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add a minor in Nuclear Technology.

- ii. Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: Railway Engineering Specialization* (M)

M. Bluehardt noted that the development of Canada's first railway specialization at Ontario Tech, supported by major companies, will provide a range of opportunities for students including co-op opportunities. This initiative addresses the gap in dedicated railway engineering programs and aligns with the University's mission to meet industry needs.

There were discussions regarding the use of "high-speed" before "railway" for marketing purposes. It was noted that while high-speed rail is a key focus, the

sector also includes freight and urban transportation. The major funding is currently directed toward urban transportation projects. It was suggested to reframe the term "railway" to evoke a more modern image, like "low carbon," to avoid outdated connotations. Marketing materials are being developed to reflect the complexity and modern nature of rail systems, and industry feedback prefers the term "rail" overall.

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by S. Nokleby, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Engineering in Automotive, Manufacturing, Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering programs for the addition of a Railway Engineering Specialization.

- iii. Mitch and Leslie Frazer Faculty of Education: Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) – Educational Studies-addition of Co-op and GAS Transfer (pathway)* (M)

M. Bluecharadt advised FEEd has spent one to two years developing a co-op program aligned with existing models in the Faculties of Business and IT and Engineering and Applied Science, respectively. Students completing the College program can enter the second year of the University program with some course adjustments, and admission will require a high average, providing an additional pathway for students.

Upon a motion duly made by A. Cooper and seconded by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add a Co-operative education (Co-op) option and GAS-Transfer pathway to the Educational Studies program.

- iv. Faculty of Health Sciences: Medical Laboratory Science* (M)

M. Bluecharadt noted that changes have been made to the Medical Laboratory Science program to align with new National Certification Exams from The Canadian Alliance of Medical Laboratory Professionals (CAMLPR). The adjustments focus on course learning outcomes while maintaining similar content for better representation.

Upon a motion duly made by L. Jacobs and seconded by T. Bryant, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Medical Laboratory Science program.

- v. Faculty of Health Sciences: Bachelor of Health Sciences – Kinesiology – to Durham College – Massage Therapy Pathway* (M)

M. Bluechar dt acknowledged that this is a unique pathway and that the change allows kinesiology graduate students to transfer to the Massage Therapy program at Durham College, thanks to the addition of a new elective course. This pathway offers students more career opportunities.

C. Rodgers explained that kinesiology graduates can fast-track into a massage therapy program by bypassing the first year, using relevant courses from their degree. This pathway allows them to earn both qualifications more quickly.

Upon a motion duly made by M. Bluechar dt and seconded by J. Arcand, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Health Sciences – Kinesiology to create a new pathway with Durham College.

vi. Faculty of Health Sciences: Physical Education Minor* (M)

M. Bluechar dt noted that new minor is being introduced in collaboration with the Faculty of Education, allowing their students to gain an additional teachable qualification, which is exclusive to them. Discussions are underway with other faculties to develop similar pathway programs, with this being the first proposal.

Responding to a question regarding consultations and who was part of the consultations, C. Rodgers confirmed that the primary focus of the consultations was on developing a second teachable course, with discussions also considering the creation of a physical ed minor. She noted that Durham College and Georgian College were directly involved in the curriculum discussions and program committees. A. Cooper added that the University is working to expand teachables for students, which will provide them with more options upon graduation, further supporting the goal of diversifying qualifications.

Upon a motion duly made by A. Cooper and seconded by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to create a Physical Education Minor.

vii. Faculty of Health Sciences: Collaborative BScN* (M)

M. Bluechar dt highlighted that this proposal was presented at USC in February and is on an expedited approval pathway to ensure and satisfy accreditation requirements.

Upon a motion duly made by M. Bluechar dt and seconded by M. Eklund, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Collaborative Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.

viii. Faculty of Health Sciences: RPN to BScN Advanced Entry* (M)

M. Bluecharadt highlighted that this proposal was presented at USC in February and is on an expedited approval pathway to ensure and satisfy accreditation requirements.

Upon a motion duly made by D. Thompson and seconded by A. Cooper, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the RPN to BScN Advanced Entry program.

ix. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts – Legal Studies* (M)

M. Bluecharadt advised that the new Legal Studies and Forensic Psychology double major reduces completion time to four years while maintaining core content. This program, in partnership with a UK university, combines practical and theoretical law training, enhancing student preparation for legal practice. The four-year option will be promoted alongside the existing five-year pathway, both supported by the Legal Studies program.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett and seconded by S. Vettor, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to:

- 1. Create a new double major in Legal Studies and Forensic Psychology*
- 2. Establish a new pathway with Teesside LLB, Middlesbrough, UK.*
- 3. Update the names of two Legal Studies specializations*

x. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts – Liberal Studies* (M)

M. Bluecharadt noted that the Liberal Studies program plans to introduce a three-year general degree to assist students transitioning from the four-year honors program, helping with retention and catering to mature professionals seeking shorter options. Advanced entry options will also be available for the Honors degree.

Upon a motion duly made by S. Fernando and seconded by P. Stoett, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to establish a 3-year (General) degree in Liberal Studies as well as Advanced-Entry and GAS pathways to the existing program.

xi. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: FSSH Co-operative Education* (M)

M. Bluecharadt noted that Co-op opportunities will be established in several programs, enhancing student experiences, and boosting employability, in line with successful practices in other Faculties.

In response to a question regarding support for students in specialized government co-op positions, given the centralization of co-op education, P. Stoett assured that support will be provided, as discussions have been held, and there is time before these positions are available. He mentioned that similar programs at other institutions have been successful and emphasized the need to begin planning for this initiative.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett and seconded by A. Cooper, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add Co-operative education (Co-op) option to the Communication and Digital Media Studies, Criminology and Justice, Legal Studies, Liberal Studies and Political Science programs within the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities.

- xii. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts – Criminology and Justice – specialization in Global Crime and Justice*(M)

M. Bluecharadt noted that the Criminology program is re-packaging existing courses into a new specialization to attract students by creatively presenting current offerings without introducing new courses.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett and seconded by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to establish a new specialization in Global Crime and Justice within the Criminology and Justice program.

- xiii. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: New Minor – Victimology and Victim Studies* (M)

M. Bluecharadt advised that this minor offers students specialized knowledge about victim experiences, advocacy, and the impact of various factors on victims. It will be the first program of its kind in Canada and will be available to all students, regardless of their major.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett and seconded by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add a minor in Victimology and Victim Studies.

8. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

J. Stoke noted that at the January GSC meeting, discussions focused on program changes aimed at enhancing student flexibility, academic support, and professional development. Adjustments to existing programs will streamline requirements while maintaining oversight, and modifications to others will improve course alignment and

expand study options. These updates, included in today's agenda for recommendation and information, are designed to better support students while ensuring consistency and effectiveness for faculty.

a) Major Program Modifications* (M)

- i. Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: Master of Engineering (MEng) Nuclear Engineering* (M)

J. Stokes advised that the MEng in Nuclear Engineering is being aligned with other engineering programs to standardize core courses, improving enrollment, consistency, and relevance within the evolving nuclear industry.

Upon a motion duly made by S. Nokleby and seconded by H. Kishawy, pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Master of Engineering (MEng), Nuclear Engineering program.

- ii. Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: Master of Engineering (MEng) Software Engineering* (M)

J. Stokes advised that the MEng in Software Engineering is aligning core courses with other programs while maintaining distinct electives, offering students more flexibility in course selection

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by S. Nokleby, pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Master of Engineering (MEng) Software Engineering program to adjust course requirements.

- iii. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities; Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation* (M)

J. Stokes noted that the program is introducing a part-time option, enabling students to complete the degree in seven terms instead of four, while keeping the full-time cohort size. This change is designed to better support professionals managing work and studies.

Upon a motion duly made by S. Fernando and seconded by P. Stoett, pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation program to establish a part-time option for the program.

9. Research Committee

a) Strategic Research Plan

L. Jacobs noted that the Strategic Research Plan (SRP) is progressing, and that the Research Committee has reached a consensus on six strategic research priorities. He advised that the priorities will be shared with the Deans first and then with the broader community for feedback. He advised that every Faculty participates in at least three priorities, highlighting their inclusiveness and interdisciplinarity. Additionally, an innovative matrix was developed to assess the alignment of priorities with strategic attributes like sustainability, economic growth, industry partnerships, and agility. The priorities will be graded based on their alignment with these attributes.

He noted that the SRP draft will be shared with the community for feedback, and that the timeline for completion is expected by late March or April, depending on the feedback received.

Responding to a question regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), L. Jacobs confirmed that the University remains committed to inclusive research excellence, as reflected in both the current and upcoming research plans. Examples include the Canada Research Excellence Equity plan, the Research Excellence Chair program, and successful grant funding for EDI initiatives like Women in Research. Additionally, the Brilliant Catalyst initiative continues to support inclusive entrepreneurship, including funding for student participation in events like the AI Hackathon.

b) Office of Research Services – Executive Report* (I)

J. Freeman presented the Office of Research Services Executive report, highlighting recent developments.

Key updates include staffing changes such as the hiring of a new Research Business Analyst, Intellectual Property Officer, and Research Legal Counsel. The Research Excellence Awards and Research Chairs are currently ongoing, with decisions expected by June 2025. Two Canada Research Chair positions are being recruited in Advanced Nuclear Engineering and AI in Education, with the nomination deadline set for Fall 2025.

She reported that the Women in Research Council has expanded its social media presence, organized fireside chats, and hosted events for faculty and graduate students. Upcoming workshops and a call for an EDI knowledge-building grant program were also mentioned during her report. She noted that Jeanette Hughes will assume the role of chair of the Women in Research Council starting July 1.

She further provided an overview of funding and research performance for 2025 as of January 9. The University is performing well compared to the previous fiscal year and is ranked highly in Canadian research rankings, including being recognized as Research University of the Year in its category. The report indicates growth in Federal and Provincial funding, with an increase in grant requests, particularly driven by a significant \$50 million lab-to-market grant.

Partnered agreements with industry remain steady. The Undergraduate Student Research Awards program is currently active, with allocations expected by March. Her update also highlighted successful assessments in animal care and nuclear safety compliance, as well as the launch of new training on research security and available workshops for faculty.

10. Consent Agenda

- a) Minutes of the Meeting of January 28, 2025* (M)
- b) *Minor Program Adjustments from USC* (I)*
 - (i) Faculty of Business and IT: Entrepreneurship Minor for Students outside of FBIT* (I)
 - (ii) Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: Bachelor of Engineering (Hons.) in Automotive Engineering* (I)
 - (iii) Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: Bachelor of Engineering (Hons.) in Manufacturing Engineering* (I)
 - (iv) Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: Electrical Engineering and Electrical Engineering Smart Grid Specialization* (I)
- c) *Minor Program Adjustments from GSC* (I)*
 - (i) Faculty of Health Sciences: Master of Science in Nursing (MScN)* (I)
 - (ii) Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Master of Forensic Psychology
Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy – Direct Entry* (I)
- d) *Cyclical Program Review from GSC* (I)*
 - (i) Final Assessment Report: Master of Information Technology and Security* (I)

The Chair confirmed that the Consent Agenda and the items in the Consent Agenda were approved and received at the start of the meeting.

*Consent agenda item pulled for discussion as noted in item #2

- e) *2025-2026 Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Schedule* (I)*

A member raised concerns about the impact of moving the last drop date to the final day of lectures, particularly on last-minute course withdrawals. Many students are withdrawing under end-of-term workload pressure, which disrupts group projects. In response, J. Stokes reaffirmed the commitment to a review, analyzing three years of data since the change was implemented. Preliminary findings suggest increased withdrawal rates but potentially improved retention in some programs. The earliest any changes could take effect would be the 2026 academic year. Further data collection and deliberation will continue, with an updated analysis expected in Fall 2025.

11. Other Business

- a) A. Duff volunteered to provide the Land Acknowledgement for the March 2025 Academic Council meeting.

12. Termination

Upon a motion duly made by S. Nokleby, the February 25, 2025 Academic Council meeting was terminated at 4:38 p.m.

Kirstie Ayotte, Assistant University Secretary