

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Minutes of the Public Session of the April 22, 2025, Meeting
via [Videoconference](#)
2:30 p.m. - 3:39 p.m.

PUBLIC SESSION

Academic Council Committee Agendas, Materials and Minutes 2024-2025

Present:

Steven Murphy (Chair)
Scott Aquanno
JoAnne Arcand
Robert Bailey
Wendy Barber
Mihai Beligan
Mary Bluechardt
Toba Bryant
Krystina Clarke
Amanda Cooper
Nicola Crow
Ana Duff
Catherine Davidson

Mikael Eklund
Nawal Elshamiy
Shanti Fernando
Mitch Frazer
Jessica Hogue
Mehdi Hossein Nejad
Brenda Jacobs
Les Jacobs
Hossam Kishawy
Lori Livingston
Janet McCabe
Carolyn McGregor
Fedor Naumkin

Scott Nokleby
Carol Rodgers
Robyn
Ruttenberg Rozen
Gillian Slade
Peter Stoett
Joe Stokes
Jemma Tam
Dwight Thompson
Tega Ubor
Shannon Vettor
Ken Wilson

Staff & Guests:

Kirstie
Ayotte (Secretary)
Chelsea Bauer
Stephanie Callahan
Alison Carruthers
Karla Emeno
Barbara Hamilton
Krista Hester
Erin Houston

Tanya Karam Zanders
Jennifer MacInnis
Brad MacIsaac
Matthew Mackenzie
Qusay Mahmoud
Kimberley McCartney
Tanner Mirrlees
Amy Neil
Niall O'Halloran

Beth Partlow
Melissa Ramirez
Amir Rastpour
Zeid Rehman
Sarah Thrush
Lisa Townsend
Becky Tranter
Adam Wingate
Chris Woods

Regrets:

Asifa Aamir
Ahmad Barari
Sayyed Ali Hosseini
Breanne McAlpin

Denina Simmons

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

The Chair called the Public Session of the Academic Council (AC) meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

In his Land Acknowledgement, M. Eklund recognized the Indigenous Peoples' enduring stewardship of Turtle Island, and acknowledged the significance of International Mother Earth Day, while reflecting on the historical impacts of colonialism on Indigenous governance. He emphasized the importance of supporting ongoing efforts to restore traditional governance systems and strengthen Indigenous self-determination.

2. Agenda (M)

Members requested that Agenda items 10.1 and 10.2(iii), respectively, be removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Upon a motion duly made by T. Bryant and seconded by S. Nokleby the Agenda was approved as amended, including approving and receiving the Consent Agenda and its contents as amended.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair thanked everyone for a successful term and acknowledged continued efforts as the semester draws to a close.

In recognition of Earth Day, he reaffirmed the University's commitment to sustainability, highlighting Ontario Tech's engagement in Earth Week initiatives, including tree planting, community cleanups, and sustainability showcases.

He also congratulated Salma Bafagih, a Master of Health Sciences candidate on winning Ontario Tech's Three Minute Thesis competition and noted that she will represent the University at the provincial level in May.

In closing, the Chair recognized recent celebrations of excellence in teaching and the achievements of the University's student athletes.

3.1 2025 Honorary Degree Recipients (I)

The Chair announced the recipients of the 2025 Honorary Degrees, expressing enthusiasm for the selections and thanking the Honorary Degrees Committee for their work on the nominations.

The Chair presented the 2025 Honorary Degree Recipients as follows:

- Danny Ardellini
- Janet Bannister
- Arlene Dickinson
- Dr. Christopher Mushquash
- Stephen Poloz

- The Hon. Michael Tulloch

4. Inquiries and Communications

The Chair invited N. Crow to provide an update on the new use of the Zoom platform.

N. Crow provided an update on the transition to Zoom, expressing appreciation for the community's patience. She explained that the University Secretariat conducted a thorough review of videoconferencing platforms to enhance the meeting experience and administrative efficiency, ultimately selecting Zoom as the most effective and consistent platform. The chosen setup aims to replicate in-person dynamics, fostering dialogue among meeting participants while accommodating public observers.

Addressing concerns about public access, N. Crow clarified that the public remains welcome to attend via a Zoom link included in the agenda, while participants receive a direct link. As with previous formats, public attendees may observe but not participate in discussions. She noted that feedback on the new platform would continue to inform the transition process.

The Chair invited J. Stokes to provide an update regarding the Special Considerations-Undergraduate and Professional Admissions Policy.

J. Stokes explained that at the March Academic Council meeting, a request was made to include the definition of the Student Engagement and Equity Team. This has now been completed, and the updated, approved policy with the changes is available on the website.

The Chair provided an update regarding a matter from the Muslim Students Association that was heard and deliberated by the Steering Committee. He reported that the Steering Committee deemed the matter inappropriate for discussion at the Academic Council. The Chair noted that there were multiple appeals currently underway, and the Provost, as the policy owner, will oversee these. The Chair advised, in response to a question, that due to these ongoing appeals and associated processes, the matter remains confidential, and the processes need to be allowed to run their course.

A question was raised regarding a recent communication sent to administration, along with a request for there to be a confirmation of its receipt. In response, the Chair confirmed that all relevant parties had been responded to.

4.1 COU Academic Colleague Report

M. Eklund noted that the meeting held on April 15, 2025 included a presentation by Sarah Laframboise, Executive Director of Evidence for Democracy, regarding the impact of U.S. policies on academic activities in Ontario universities. The discussion covered historical and current domestic policies in Canada, including the effects of the current U.S. administration's actions on research funding and

collaboration, as well as data censorship and concerns over scientific integrity. A particular focus was on the potential risks to Canadian research, such as the loss of U.S. funding for Canadian collaborations and the weakening of public trust in universities.

He also reported that discussions highlighted the ongoing lobbying efforts by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) for increased funding, particularly for STEM programs. He advised that efforts are underway to address the May provincial budget and ensure funding for research and innovation. The meeting emphasized the importance of maintaining access to teaching resources and ensuring that educational material remains accessible despite potential restrictions stemming from U.S. policies.

The following discussion highlighted the opportunity for Canada to attract U.S. researchers due to changing U.S. policies. Some saw it as a chance to repatriate Canadian scholars, while others noted that Canada has not as yet implemented large-scale relocation incentives. The overall view was that this could be a significant opportunity if leveraged and depending on political support for research funding.

5. Provost's Remarks

5.1 Senior Academic Administrator Search Update (I)

The Provost was pleased to announce that Dr. Carol Rodgers has been renewed for a second term as Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, following the Renewal Advisory Committee's overwhelming support for her renewal. She noted that Dr. Rodgers' contributions have been highly valued within the Faculty.

She also advised that the search for the next Dean of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is progressing well. Finalist candidates for the position are expected to be identified later this week, with campus interviews planned for mid-May as the final step in the selection process.

Council members congratulated Dean Rodgers on her renewal.

5.2 Teaching Award Recipients (I)

The Provost congratulated all nominees for the recent Teaching Awards, emphasizing the importance of teaching excellence at Ontario Tech. She acknowledged the collective efforts of instructors, students and staff for contributing to academic success and invited Council members to join her in celebrating the following major award recipients' achievements:

- Alannis Davis (FBIT) -Teaching Assistant Award (Student)
- Keisha Deoraj (FSci) - Tim McTiernan Student Mentorship Award
- Amir Rastpour (FBIT) - Learning Reimagined Award
- Sarah Stokes (FEd) - Open Education Award
- Laura Banks (FHSci) - Early Career Teaching Award

- Tanner Mirrlees (FSSH) - Award for Excellence in Teaching

Council members congratulated all of the recipients.

6. Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)

The Chair invited M. Bluechardt to provide the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) update.

M. Bluechardt noted that the March 18, 2025 USC meeting included a discussion on new undergraduate programs which will be presented to Academic Council for future consideration. The Committee also reviewed processes related to student access and participation, with potential improvements to the auditing and system configurations.

Additionally, she noted two 18-month cyclical reviews and one final learning report from March's USC meeting that are included as information in the AC's materials.

7. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

The Chair invited J. Stokes to provide the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) update.

J. Stokes noted that the GSC meeting on March 25 only had the one item that is for approval by Academic Council today. It also included several new Associate Graduate Faculty and an Emeritus Graduate Faculty appointment for Dr. Bill Hunter from the Frazer Faculty of Education.

7.1 New Program Proposal

- i. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Master of Social Media Communication in Online Creators* (M)

J. Stokes noted that this new course-based Master's program focuses on supporting individuals in the online influencer and digital creator space, with unique pathways compared to traditional programs.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett and seconded by R. Ruttenberg Rozen, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Master of Social Media Communication in Online Creators program and recommends approval of the program to the Board of Governors.

8. Governance and Nominations Committee (GNC)

The Chair invited L. Livingston to provide the Governance and Nominations Committee (GNC) update.

8.1 2025 Nominations and Election Results* (M)

L. Livingston reported that the Governance and Nominations Committee (GNC) met on April 15 to review and recommend for approval faculty and student

appointments to Academic Council and its committees for the 2025-2028 term for teaching staff and the 2025-2026 term for student representatives. She noted that the Academic Council election ran from January 27 to March 28, following procedures approved by the Committee, and involved a combination of acclamations and contested elections. Candidate eligibility was verified according to established guidelines, and student appointments included both new and returning members.

She reported that notably, for the first time in recent election cycles, all teaching staff positions on Academic Council have been successfully filled for the 2025–2026 academic year. She noted that final committee composition recommendations will be presented at the June meetings of the Governance and Nominations Committee and Academic Council, so concluding the 2025 election process.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett, and seconded by J. Stokes, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance & Nominations Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the following appointments to the Academic Council and its Committees:

Teaching Staff Position on Academic Council for the term of September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2028:

- ❖ *Faculty of Business and IT:*
 - *Shahram Heydari*
 - *Mehdi Hossein-Nejad*
 - *Gabby Resch*
- ❖ *Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science:*
 - *Ahmad Barari*
 - *Scott Nokleby*
 - *Sayyed Ali Hosseini*
- ❖ *Faculty of Health Sciences:*
 - *Laura Banks*
- ❖ *Faculty of Science:*
 - *Rupinder Brar*
- ❖ *Faculty of Social Science and Humanities:*
 - *Rachel Ariss*
- ❖ *Faculty at Large*
 - *Toba Bryant*

Teaching Staff Position on the Academic Appeals Committee for the term of September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2028:

- *Brent MacRae*

Teaching Staff Position on the Honorary Degrees Committee for the term of September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2028:

- *Janet McCabe*

- *Daniel Hoornweg*

Student position on Academic Council for the term of September 1, 2025 - August 31, 2026, renewable for an additional year:

- *Aliza Rizwan (undergraduate); and*
- *Venuga Kariharan (undergraduate)*

Student position on the Academic Appeals Committee for the term of September 1, 2025 - August 31, 2026, renewable for an additional year:

- *Sierra Lucier (undergraduate); and*
- *Kartiki Balsekar (undergraduate)*

Student position on the Honorary Degrees Committee for the term of September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026, renewable for an additional year:

- *Jemma Tam*

Five (5) Abstentions noted

Upon a motion duly made by L. Livingston and seconded by M. Eklund, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance & Nominations Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the re-appointment of the following students to Academic Council and its Committees for an additional term ending August 31, 2026 (not eligible for further renewal):

- *Krystina Clarke (graduate student) - Academic Council*
- *Gillian Slade (graduate student) - Academic Council*
- *Jemma Tam (undergraduate student) - Academic Council, Academic Appeals Committee and Undergraduate Studies Committee*

Two (2) Abstentions noted

In response to a question regarding timelines to fill committee positions, N. Crow explained that following the Academic Council's approval for the elected candidates, a call for expressions of interest will follow, with a view to completion ahead of the GNC June meeting.

9. Research Committee

The Chair invited L. Jacobs to provide the Research Committee update.

L. Jacobs highlighted that in late March, the University secured over \$4 million in NSERC and SSHRC funding, achieving a 66% success rate for Discovery Grant applications, a significant improvement from previous years.

He advised that the Strategic Research Plan has completed final consultations with Academic Council and the Board of Governors and will be presented in its final format by the end of May.

He also reported that adjudication for the Research Excellence Chair and Research Excellence Award programs are underway, with results expected in mid to late June. He encouraged AC members to consider nominations for the Royal Society of Canada Fellowship and College programs to continue strengthening institutional recognition.

10. Consent Agenda:

10.2 Cyclical Program Reviews from USC* (I)

- i. Bachelor of Health Science (Hons) and Bachelor of Health Science (Hons), Kinesiology – 18 Month Follow-up* (I)
- ii. Bachelor of Arts (Hons) – Legal Studies – 18 Month Follow-up* (I)

The Chair confirmed that the contents of the Consent Agenda were approved and received under Agenda Item #2, save for Agenda items 10.1 and 10.2(iii).

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

10.1 Minutes of the Meeting of March 25, 2025* (M)

A Member noted that the earlier information shared under item #4 of the Agenda addressed the concerns raised regarding the previous Meeting's minutes.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Bailey and seconded by S. Nokleby, the Minutes of the Meeting of March 25, 2025 were approved as presented.

10.2 Cyclical Program Review from USC* (I)

- iii. Cyclical Program Review – Final Assessment Report and Program Learning Outcomes – Bachelor of Science (Hons), Biological Science* (I)

In response to a concern raised by a Member about non-public sessions in Academic Council committee meetings, particularly regarding this cyclical program review, the Chair invited K. McCartney to address the issue.

K. McCartney explained that as USC and GSC materials are now posted publicly, certain documents, such as Final Assessment Reports (FAR) that go to USC and GSC, need to remain confidential in line with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) review and auditing procedures. The FAR contains detailed information, including self-study, reviewer comments, and program responses, which must be kept confidential. Other documents, such as the Executive Summary and Implementation Plan, are non-confidential and so are publicly available and provided as information to the Academic Council and Board of Governors. She advised that the decision to put the FARs that go to USC and GSC, respectively, within a non-public session enables the maintenance of the requisite confidentiality while ensuring compliance with IQAP.

The Chair reminded members that this item was for information only.

11. Other Business

11.1 Land acknowledgement for May Academic Council Meeting
J. Stokes volunteered to provide the May land acknowledgement.

12. Termination

There being no other business, and upon a motion to terminate by S. Nokleby, the Academic Council meeting terminated at 3:39 p.m.

Kirstie Ayotte, Assistant University Secretary