

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Minutes of the Public Session of the January 27, 2026 Meeting via Videoconference 2:31 p.m. - 3:58 p.m.

Academic Council Committee Agendas, Materials and Minutes 2025-2026

Present:

Scott Nokleby, Acting
Chair
JoAnne Arcand
Rachel Ariss
Mary Bluechardt
Rupinder Brar
Amanda Cooper
Catherine Davidson
Ana Duff
Mikael Eklund
Shanti Fernando

Shahram Heydari
Jessica Hogue
Mehdi Hossein-Nejad
Sayyed Ali Hosseini
Brenda Jacobs
Les Jacobs
Venuga Kariharan
Lori Livingston
Janet McCabe
Carolyn McGregor
Pejman Mirza-Babaei

Gabby Resch
Carol Rodgers
Robyn
Ruttenberg-Rozen
Denina Simmons
Gillian Slade
Peter Stoett
Joe Stokes
Dwight Thompson
Ken Wilson

Regrets:

Asifa Aamir
Scott Aquanno
Laura Banks
Ahmad Barari
Wendy Barber

Mihai Beligan
Toba Bryant
Krystina Clarke
Mitch Frazer
Steven Murphy

Hossam Kishawy
Fedor Naumkin
Aliza Rizwan
Jemma Tam
Shannon Vettor

Staff and Guests:

Kirstie Ayotte
Nicola Crow

Sandra Grouette
(Secretary)
Jennifer MacInnis

Brad MacIsaac
Sarah Thrush

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

The Acting Chair called the Public Session of the Academic Council (AC) Meeting to order at 2:31 p.m. and provided their personal Land Acknowledgement.

2. Agenda (M)

Upon a request from a Member, Agenda item 12.3 was removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen and seconded by B. Jacobs, the Agenda was approved as amended, including approving and receiving the Consent Agenda and its contents, as amended.

One (1) Objection

3. Chair's Remarks

The Acting Chair shared with the Members that the Chair, S. Murphy, is in southeast Asia, working to advance the nuclear skills training and workforce development, and human capacity partnerships, alongside broader nuclear cooperation discussions. S. Murphy asked to convey his sincere thanks to everyone for all the great work that is going on to advance the Differentiated Growth strategy which is reflected in Academic Council's action-packed agenda. The Acting Chair further noted that the agenda really highlights Academic Council's role with all the innovative and exciting opportunities for students, that in turn enable the University to grow and advance its strategic priorities.

4. Inquiries and Communications

4.1. COU Academic Colleague Report* (I)

R. Ruttenberg-Rozen referred members to the Report contained in the materials. She highlighted the group's discussion with Dr. W. Turkel from Western University regarding generative AI within research and teaching, and a question-and-answer session with Dr. Goel from the University of Waterloo who's heading-up the Academic Colleagues' Taskforce on AI. R. Ruttenberg-Rozen noted that the discussions reflected those at Academic Council.

In response to a Member asking about any news about the funding formula development status, R. Ruttenberg-Rozen indicated that there may be updates next time.

5. Provost's Remarks

L. Livingston reminded members that February is Black History Month which Canadians have been recognizing since 1995 to honour the legacy, achievements and contributions of Black People to Canada's history and society. L. Livingston highlighted upcoming events in recognition of Black History Month and expressed kudos to all those organizing these events and encouraged all to learn more and participate wherever possible. She also highlighted the February 20, 2026 Round Dance that Indigenous Education and Cultural Services are hosting at Charles Hall.

C. Davidson provided more information on the Black Scholars Digital Showcase being presented at the Campus Library to celebrate renowned black scholars.

L. Livingston thanked everyone for all their contributions to the many events going on, which also speak to the University's EDI commitment.

6. 2026-2027 Tuition Framework* (D)

S. Thrush provided a summary of the proposed 2026-2027 tuition fees and reminded Academic Council that these fees are in the context of the current provincial tuition fee framework which includes the ongoing tuition freeze for domestic students.

With respect to out-of-province students to help position the University strategically, she advised that the University continues to maximize the allowable fee increases for this student population, and so this year a 5% increase is proposed. She acknowledged that the University does not have too many of these students.

For the three programs that are approved to have tuition anomaly adjustments as part of the domestic undergraduate tuition framework, S. Thrush noted that a 3.9% increase in fees is planned for the Bachelor of Commerce and the maximum 7.5% increase for the Bachelor of

Computer Science, with Bachelor of Engineering fees now frozen as fees have reached the provincial average.

S. Thrush advised that greater flexibility in increases is available for international student fees, with a 3% across the board increase proposed in international undergraduate fees along with the reaffirmed commitment to not increase such fees by more than 5% per annum in years two to four, which allows students to have stability and predictability in their planning.

For research-based Masters and PhD programs, S. Thrush reported the University is again proposing a 0% international tuition increase and a 5% increase to international professional/course-based Masters and Graduate Diplomas.

In terms of undergraduate co-op and internship fees, she advised these are being adjusted for inflation, so there is a 2.7% increase being recommended for approval. In response to a question on students' ability to afford rising fees, S. Thrush noted that the inflationary increase would not exceed student's wages. She also reported on the University's continued priority and commitment to offer student financial supports.

Through the ensuing discussion it was confirmed that the three undergraduate programs that can have fee increases arose from the tuition anomaly adjustment provided for within the tuition free framework. This exception allowed universities to choose three programs where fees could be increased up to the provincial average. Members also engaged in dialogue on the status of international students, the University's admission priorities in this regard, and the associated international tuition fee increases. It was noted during the discussion that the international student situation remains complex and fluid with the University's international tuition fee structure lower than the provincial average. Academic Council was advised that the federal international student cap continues to impact the university sector and this was deterring applicants to Ontario Tech rather than tuition fees.

In terms of admission priorities, Academic Council was advised that the University does not prioritize applicants based on country of origin or study permit approval likelihood. Admissions decisions remain program based and academically driven with smaller programs potentially seeing more opportunity to increase international enrollment where capacity and resources permit.

7. Undergraduate Studies Committee

M. Bluehardt provided an update from the November and December 2025 Undergraduate Studies Committee Meetings. She reported that across both meetings, the Committee continued steady progress, with Faculties demonstrating significant effort to strengthen programs, enhance student success, and ensure alignment with accreditation requirements and institutional strategic priorities. She also advised that Members maintained a strong focus on student-centred curriculum improvements and thoughtful program updates.

M. Bluehardt noted that proposals brought forward to the Committee reflected meaningful collaboration, innovation, and responsiveness to student and industry requests, academic and regulatory needs, as well as ongoing support to and promotion of research and industry

partnerships. She highlighted that Committee discussions consistently underscored appreciation for the extensive work Faculties are undertaking to support academic quality, innovation, flexibility, and positive student outcomes.

7.1. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Legal Studies* (M)

M. Bluehardt summarized the proposed changes to the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Legal Studies program. She shared that these modifications enable fourth year students to take the Master's in Social Practice and Innovation (MSPI) course. In addition, prerequisites for a number of Legal Studies courses have been updated to reduce heavy doctrinal research requirements, making the courses more accessible to students across programs and enhancing overall student choice.

In response to questions about additional resource requirements for each of the proposals under Agenda Item 7, L. Livingston reaffirmed and reiterated that resources follow enrollment and that this is the case for all programs. She noted that within the proposals, specific resources are not detailed due to the simple fact it is unknown what the changes are going to do and re-emphasized that resources are dictated by enrollment.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Ariss and seconded by K. Wilson, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Legal Studies program.

7.2. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Legal Studies Minor Name Change* (M)

M. Bluehardt advised that this update brings the names of the Legal Studies minors into alignment with the recently revised specializations, changing the minors' titles to Human Rights and Advocacy, and Law, Technology, and Society.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett and seconded by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves Major Program Modification to change the name of two minors in the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Legal Studies program.

7.3. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Business and IT: Bachelor of Commerce* (M)

M. Bluehardt reported that the proposed Commerce specialization builds on existing micro- and macroeconomics and adds courses in energy and environmental economics, including options from Political Science.

A Member asked that appropriate resource requirements are delineated within this proposal and the following ones with some other Members suggesting a reformatting of the proposal to take into account projected students and associated resources required. In response, it was noted that this matter had been addressed as part of Faculty Council's discussion on this particular agenda item with various strategies already underway, including recruitment to bring new people into the Faculty and enabling a shifting of course portfolios, all of which was based on the earlier noted premise that resources follow enrollment.

Upon a motion duly made by C. McGregor and seconded by A. Cooper, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves

the Major Program Modification to add a new specialization in Economics to the Bachelor of Commerce program.

7.4. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Business and IT: Bachelor of Information Technology in Game Development and Interactive Media* (M)

M. Bluecharadt advised that this is a new interdisciplinary specialization in the BIT Game Development program, focusing on video games, creative industries, and society, which integrates FSSH and FBIT strengths to enhance the program's creative industries curriculum.

It was highlighted that this proposal leverages strengths across the Faculty of Business and (FBIT) and the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities (FSSH) to enable an inter-faculty approach to broaden opportunities for students.

Upon a motion duly made by C. McGregor and seconded by G. Resch, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add a new specialization in Video Games, Creative Industries and Society to the Bachelor of Information Technology in Game Development and Interactive Media program.

7.5. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Health Sciences: Bachelor of Health Science (Hons) in Medical Laboratory Science and Medical Laboratory Science - Bridge - Advanced Diploma in Biotechnology* (M)

M. Bluecharadt summarized the proposed program changes that were in response to industry and regulatory exam changes, accreditation requirements, student feedback, and prior program recommendations. She noted that the updates simplify and improve the practicum through greater use of simulation and reduced practicum hours, streamline program delivery, and expand eligibility to college graduates beyond Durham College.

Upon a motion duly made by Carolyn McGregor and seconded by K. Wilson, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Health Science (Hons) in Medical Laboratory Science and Medical Laboratory Science – Bridge – Advanced Diploma in Biotechnology programs.

7.6. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Science: Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Computer Science* (M)

M. Bluecharadt shared that this proposal provides updates to the Computer Science program, including core program changes, modifications to existing specializations, and two new specializations: Artificial Intelligence and Software Development. She noted that all specializations will include a special topics course, with additional course renumbering and updates.

In response to a question about the increase in courses and resources required, it was noted that the Faculty was in the process of hiring and a big part of the work of Faculty's management is to manage resources in appropriate ways.

Upon a motion duly made by K. Wilson and seconded by D. Simmons, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Computer Science.

7.7. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Science: Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Physics - Computational Physics specialization* (M)

M. Bluechardt advised that this addition reflects the growing computational focus field, introduces new fourth year courses, and adjusts prerequisites on an existing course so both Astrophysics and Computational Physics students can enroll.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Brar and seconded by K. Wilson, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Physics program to add a new specialization in Computational Physics.

7.8. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Communication and Digital Media Studies* (M)

M. Bluechardt reported that this proposal adds two new Communications and Digital Media Studies (CDMS) specializations – Video Games, Creative Industries and Society, and AI for Professional Communications; as well some updates to the program's elective options.

It was confirmed that this proposal was another example of collaboration between FBIT and FSSH to broaden opportunities for students

Upon a motion duly made by C. McGregor and seconded by A. Cooper, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add two new specializations Video Games, Creative Industries and Society and AI for Professional Communicators to the Communication and Digital Media Studies program and to update elective options in the Program.

7.9. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Criminology and Justice – Advanced Entry* (M)

M. Bluechardt advised that the Criminology and Justice Advanced Entry Pathway can now be completed fully online, leveraging existing online courses. She also shared that this option aims to attract more advanced entry students by providing greater flexibility and accessibility.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Stoett and seconded by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to create a fully online option for the Advanced Entry pathway of the Criminology and Justice program.

7.10. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) - Liberal Studies including Advanced Entry and GAS Transfer options, Liberal Studies Minor* (M)

M. Bluechardt reported that the Liberal Studies program will be renamed General Arts to increase recognition and attract more applicants, while retaining its original interdisciplinary vision. Program requirements, learning outcomes, and course prefixes will be updated, and two new

honours specializations added. She also advised that the Liberal Studies minor will be renamed Social Science, Humanities and Arts to align with these changes.

It was also confirmed that this change now aligns with what is offered at other universities.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen and seconded by G. Resch, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to change the name of all Liberal Studies degree program options to General Arts, to make related adjustments to the program and courses, to add two new specializations to the Honours program, and to change the name of the Liberal Studies Minor to Social Science, Humanities and Arts.

7.11. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Social Science & Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Political Science* (M)

M. Bluechartd advised that a new Economic specialization is being added to the BA Honours in Political Science, with updates to program requirements and electives. She reported that this initiative is a joint effort between FBIT and FSSH and complements related changes in the Political Science program.

Upon a motion duly made by C. McGregor and seconded by K. Wilson, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add a new specialization in Economics to the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Political Science program and to update program Requirements.

8. Graduate Studies Committee

P. Mirza-Babaei reported on the Graduate Studies Committee Meetings from November and December 2025. He advised that over the course of two meetings, the Committee advanced a significant amount of graduate-level academic work with Faculties actively refining programs, updating pathways, and responding to evolving student and industry needs. He shared that the Committee's discussions emphasized maintaining momentum in graduate education, supporting thoughtful program evolution, and reinforcing structures that promote graduate student success, alongside ongoing efforts related to recruitment, community building, and strengthening the overall graduate academic environment.

8.1. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation* (M)

P. Mirza-Babaei shared that the program started this September with its third cohort of students and that it aims to stay flexible by offering options for working students, and those seeking a one-year route instead of a 16-month structure. He further noted that program requirements remain unchanged, and the proposed updates are minor refinements based on two cycles of course delivery. He reminded Academic Council that the part-time option was approved last year, and these changes enable its implementation.

It was clarified that the two newly listed options are not instructional courses but supervisory related, designed to support part-time students who wish to extend their Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation (MIPSI) over additional semesters.

Upon a motion duly made by C. McGregor and seconded by P. Mirza-Babaei, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves

Major Program Modification to the Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation program to establish defined program maps for part-time and full-time accelerated students, to permit undergraduate enrollment in targeted MSPI courses, and to update course descriptions.

8.2. Major Program Modification: Faculty of Business and IT: PhD - Cybersecurity* (M)

P. Mirza-Babaei reported that the proposed changes to the PhD in Cybersecurity align it with other PhD programs, including adding a formal part-time option without changing academic requirements and clarifying seminar expectations. He advised that the seminar requirement would shift to the standard two seminars, addressing previous confusion for students and administration.

In response to a Member's question about resources required to support this proposal given the prospective increase in students, it was noted that this proposal addresses gaps that faculty have identified, as well as helping respond to faculty wanting to have supervisory opportunities.

Upon a motion duly made by C. McGregor and seconded by P. Mirza-Babaei, that pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Cybersecurity PhD program to add a part-time option and modify the scheduling of the seminar component.

8.3. Major Program Modification: Frazer Faculty of Education: Master of Education* (M)

P. Mirza-Babaei advised that the proposal formalizes required graduate courses as prerequisites so they are taken at the start of a program. He also shared that this change is intended to ensure students develop a strong foundation in research and learning principles before progressing to other coursework, addressing issues caused when these courses are taken later in the program.

Upon a motion duly made by B. Jacobs and seconded by P. Mirza-Babaei, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Master of Education program, updating all courses to include EDUC 5001G and EDUC 5002G as pre-requisites with concurrency.

8.4. New Program Proposal: Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science: Graduate Diploma in Railway Engineering* (M)

P. Mirza-Babaei shared that this is a new diploma in railway engineering in response to industry interest and need. He highlighted that the program uses existing faculty and resources, offers four dedicated courses, and positions the University uniquely to meet growing demand in the field, especially with the emergence of high-speed rail.

A Member requested clarification regarding industry support and involvement for this new railway engineering program. It was confirmed that industry partners are actively engaged, including one who first approached the University to initiate this specialized programming. Industry partners are also providing coop and placement opportunities for students. Canada being the only G7 country that offers a standalone engineering degree was also highlighted, which accordingly enables the University to be uniquely positioned to respond to the global need for this type of specialization.

It was also emphasized that this new graduate diploma provides opportunities for those who have completed their undergraduate studies to do this specialization now that it is available.

Upon a motion duly made by G. Resch and seconded by P. Mirza-Babaei, and pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Graduate Diploma in Railway Engineering and recommends approval of the program to the Board of Governors.

9. Governance & Nominations Committee

L. Livingston noted that the main agenda item from the January 20, 2026 Governance & Nominations Committee Meeting was the 2026 Election Key Dates and Open Positions, which was included as an information item under 12.5 of the Consent Agenda.

In response to a question relating to filling open positions during the election process, it was confirmed through the ensuing discussion, that the approach is the same as last year in that the outlined 2026 election process will conclude in June with Academic Council and its Committees having the requisite membership to enable these bodies to perform their business and functions.

10. Research Committee

L. Jacobs provided an update from the Research Committee. He highlighted the University's continued support of the Research Chair Program. He advised that postings were released in December with nominations due in March, and most appointments expected in March and the remainder in June. He noted that Research Chair appointments typically take up to two years, making the accelerated timeline significant. He also reported on the successful nomination of an Excellence Research Chair candidate who will be joining the University.

Members were encouraged to review, as soon as possible, priority research areas and promptly identify eligible nominees who must be active researchers affiliated with a university or research organization. Each Chair provides \$5 million in funding and will be accompanied by a webpage highlighting the associated research area.

He further noted that under the Emerging Research Leaders category, candidates may be eligible for an additional funding stream providing their work aligns with the four designated research areas. He added that the program offers funding opportunities for postdoctoral fellows and PhD students, with several faculty members already preparing submissions.

11. Policy Instruments

11.1. Revised Registration and Course Selection Policy* (M)

J. Stokes provided a summary of the revisions to the Registration and Course Selection Policy. He shared that the revisions update the Policy to be more inclusive by reflecting changes that have occurred since the original policy was drafted.

In response to a request to clarify professional versus research based graduate programs, J. Stokes shared that Canadian institutions tend to emphasize research focused programming whereas in jurisdictions like the United Kingdom 75% are more professionally oriented and 25% are research focused. He further noted that due to this there is a gap that has not been filled for professionals looking for a non-research based graduate degree.

Upon a motion duly made by K. Wilson and seconded by J. Stokes, Academic Council hereby approves the amended Registration and Course Selection Policy.

12. Consent Agenda: (M)

The Chair confirmed that contents of the Consent Agenda were approved and received under Agenda Item # 2, save for Item 12.3.

12.1 Minutes of the Meeting of November 25, 2025* (M)

12.2 Approved Exception to Residency Requirement - Faculty of Science* (I)

12.3 Conferral of Degrees – Winter 2026* (M)

12.4 Information Item from GNC: (I)

- (i) Election Key Dates and Open Positions* (I)

12.5 Minor Program Adjustments from USC* (I)

- (i) Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science - Engineering Year 1* (I)
- (ii) Faculty of Social Science and Humanities - Indigenous Studies minor* (I)
- (iii) Faculty of Social Science and Humanities - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Political Science* (I)
- (iv) Faculty of Social Science and Humanities - Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Sociology, Technology and Innovation* (I)
- (v) Faculty of Science - Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Mathematics for Science and Industry* (I)

12.6 Cyclical Program Reviews from USC* (I):

- (i) Bachelor of Health Sciences (Hons) in Medical Laboratory Science - 18 Month Follow up* (I)
- (ii) Bachelor of Information Technology (Hons) in Game Development and Interactive Media - Executive Summary and Implementation Plan* (I)
- (iii) Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) - Executive Summary, Implementation Plan, and Program Learning Outcomes* (I)
- (iv) Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Communication and Digital Media Studies - Executive Summary, Implementation Plan, and Program Learning Outcomes* (I)

12.7 Minor Program Adjustments from GSC* (I)

- (i) Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science:
- (ii) Engineering Management, MEngM* (I)
- (iii) Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science:
- (iv) Mechatronics Engineering, MASc* (I)

Items pulled from Consent Agenda:

12.3 2026-2027 Undergraduate Academic Schedule* (I) 2026-2027 Graduate Academic Schedule* (I)

Clarification was sought by some Members on add/drop date deadlines and the recent report presented to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) in this regard. It was confirmed that USC had received a report for information only due to prior enquiries at USC on the outcome of the changes made a few years ago to the add/drop date deadlines. It was also noted that based on the review of outcomes, data and feedback, the report confirmed current deadlines will remain unchanged.

The ensuing discussion included the appropriate purview of receiving such a report either at USC or Academic Council, with a Member requesting that the report be brought to Academic Council. The Acting Chair provided a reminder on the appropriate process to

request the addition of items to the Academic Council agenda. N. Crow advised that the report provided as information to USC is within the USC publicly posted materials on the Secretariat website.

13. Other Business - None

14. Termination

There being no other business, and upon a motion to terminate by K. Wilson, the AC Meeting terminated at 3:58 p.m.

Sandra Grouette, Assistant University Secretary