

ACADEMIC COUNCIL
GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE (GSC)

Minutes of the Public Session of the April 28, 2026 Meeting
via Videoconference
9:00 a.m. - 10:04 a.m.

Graduate Studies Committee Agenda & Materials 2025-2026

Present:

Pejman Mirza-Babaei,
Chair
Akramul Azim
Dario Bonetta
Carla Cesaroni
Krystina Clarke
Nicola Crow
Catherine Davidson
Franco Gaspari

Leigh Harkins
Shahram Heydari
Mehdi Hossein-Nejad
Les Jacobs
Dima Jawad
Karolina Krystyniak
Xianke Lin
Holly MacPherson
Olga Marques

Kimberley McCartney
Thomas McMorrow
Diana Petrarca
Faisal Qureshi
Ghaus Rizvi
Lennaert van Veen
Nick Wattie
Ken Wilson
Adam Wingate

Regrets:

JoAnne Arcand
Amanda Cooper
Jennifer Abbass Dick
Sayyed Ali Hosseini

Hossam Kishawy (on leave)
Lori Livingston
Carolyn McGregor
Scott Nokleby

Carol Rodgers
Andrea Slane
Akira Tokuhito

Staff and Guests:

Sandra Grouette (Secretary)

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

The Chair called the Public Session of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and N. Crow provided their personal Land Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by F. Gaspari and seconded by A. Azim, the GSC Agenda was approved as presented, including approving and receiving the Consent Agenda and its contents.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair shared several updates and acknowledgements related to graduate student achievements and scholarship successes over the previous two months. The Chair highlighted the successful completion of the annual Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition, which

included approximately 20 student participants. The Chair extended congratulations to Jessica Biasin from the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, the first place competition winner and who will represent the University at the upcoming provincial competition at Brock University; Melissa Handford from the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, who was second place; and Sonia Mirza from the Faculty of Health Sciences, who received the People's Choice Award. Appreciation was expressed to SGPS staff, supervisors, and all individuals who supported the event and participating students.

The Chair also recognized recipients of several SGPS awards who were: Martin Agelin-Chaab from the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science who received the SGPS Award of Excellence in Graduate Supervision; Maria Joelma from the Faculty of Health Sciences who received the SGPS Postdoctoral Fellow Excellence Award; and Jessica Biasin from the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities who received the Graduate-Level Presidential Award of Excellence in Student Leadership. The Chair thanked all individuals involved in the nomination and adjudication processes.

The Chair further announced increases in scholarship allocations for the upcoming year, including an increase to thirty Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) awards and an increase to eight Queen Elizabeth Scholarship awards. The Chair also noted that three students received Vector Institute of AI scholarships, including students from the MITS, MBAI, and Computer Science programs. Recognition was given to course-based graduate programs for supporting students in obtaining external scholarship funding.

4. Academic Policy Instruments

4.1 Examination and Grading Policy Amendments* (M)

A. Wingate provided an overview of the amendments, noting that the proposed revisions primarily address repeated deferred examinations within undergraduate programs. The amendments clarify that in most circumstances, students who miss a deferred examination will not be permitted an additional deferred examination opportunity and may instead pursue consideration for late withdrawal in cases involving transitory illness or injury. The revisions also preserve accommodation processes related to disability and other protected grounds.

In response to a question on the governance and approval process for policies that apply across both undergraduate and graduate studies, it was noted that the Policy had already been reviewed and recommended by the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC), and, if recommended by GSC, would proceed to Academic Council for approval. Regarding a question on the frequency of deferred examinations within graduate programs, A. Wingate advised that deferred examinations at the graduate level are rare and that the policy changes primarily target issues arising within undergraduate studies.

Upon a motion duly made by S. Heydari and seconded by G. Rizvi, that GSC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the revised Examination and Grading Policy for approval by Academic Council.

4.2 Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Policy and Procedures* (D)

The Chair shared that this item is coming for discussion at GSC following discussion at USC last week and the established public consultation process. The Chair also noted that GSC was asked to submit questions in advance, with one submission received.

K. McCartney provided an overview of the proposed changes and the process to date, including addressing questions that were raised at last week's USC meeting and the advance questions submitted by a GSC Member. She confirmed that the materials were presented for discussion at this meeting with the matter coming back in May for approval at both USC and GSC.

K. McCartney advised that the updates were responding to the provincial Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), the implementation experience to date with these policy instruments, and alignment with other institutional policy instruments. She noted that the proposed changes aim to improve clarity, reduce duplication across policies, and support more flexible and responsive academic processes while maintaining faculty-level governance responsibilities. It was also reported that attention was given to streamlining curriculum-related processes to allow faculties greater agility in implementing course-level changes, while ensuring that matters affecting programs and institutional oversight continue to follow established approval pathways.

During K. McCartney's overview, further clarification was provided regarding cyclical review procedures, including revised reporting processes intended to strengthen clarity and collegial oversight while reducing unnecessary approval requirements.

The Committee discussed the approval pathway for policies and procedures, the timing of updates in relation to anticipated provincial QAF changes, and the distinction between curricular and administrative course changes. Concerns were expressed regarding the wording of provisions related to faculty council authority and the interpretation of "for academic credit" courses.

In response, K. McCartney explained that the approval process is consistent with established institutional processes. It was also reaffirmed that the current revisions were being advanced to address immediate operational needs, despite anticipated future provincial updates, which are not expected to require substantial further revisions when they are eventually known given the timeline for which is uncertain.

K. McCartney noted that course-level changes identified as administrative would still remain under faculty-level governance processes, even if they no longer require broader institutional governance steps. She clarified the use of the term "for academic credit," including its relationship to micro-credentials and degree program requirements.

In conclusion, it was reiterated that this item would return for formal approval in May.

5. Outstanding Thesis Award Amendments* (M)

C. Cesaroni explained that the proposed revisions were developed in response to feedback received from previous award adjudication committees. She noted that comparing these across disciplines had proven challenging and that the revised process would allow each Faculty to identify and recognize its own outstanding thesis recipients. The amendments also formalize an existing practice whereby nominations may originate not only from external examiners prior to the defence, but also from examining committees during the defence process itself.

The Committee discussion focused on the nomination process and the importance of ensuring fairness and avoiding perceived conflicts of interest during defence deliberations. Some concerns were expressed regarding the potential pressures associated with nomination discussions occurring during thesis examinations. It was also noted that faculty-level selection committees would continue to provide an additional layer of review and adjudication. Discussion also addressed whether nominations should require majority or unanimous support from examining committees. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to include a friendly amendment requiring unanimous support from the examining committee for nomination eligibility.

Upon a motion duly made by C. Cesaroni and seconded by O. Marques, that GSC hereby approves the amendments to the Outstanding Thesis Award, as amended.

6. Consent Agenda* (M)

The Chair confirmed that the contents of the Consent Agenda were approved and received under Agenda Item # 2. With respect to the Graduate Thesis Completion Course in the Consent Agenda, the Chair highlighted the updates related to the process in this regard. Appreciation was extended to colleagues in the Office of the Registrar, SGPS, and the tuition working group for their contributions to the initiative.

6.1 Public Minutes of the February 24, 2026 Meeting* (M)

6.2 Associate Graduate Faculty (I)

- Business Analytics and AI, Catherine Inbihunu, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Computer Science, Meaghan Charest-Finn, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
- Computer Science, Agnes Grudniewicz, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Computer Science, Saiqa Aleem, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Computer Science, Shih-Chia Huang, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Computer Science, Priyamvada Tripathi, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Computer Science, Michael Miljanovic, Faculty of Science
- Criminology, Jennifer Lavoie, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities
- Education, Diane Tepylo, Frazer Faculty of Education
- Education, Alison Mann, Frazer Faculty of Education
- Education, Katie Higginbottom, Frazer Faculty of Education
- Education, Margaret Robinson, Frazer Faculty of Education
- Education, Sherra Robinson, Frazer Faculty of Education
- Health Sciences, Sara Allin, Faculty of Health Sciences

- Health Sciences, Kirsten Burgomaster, Faculty of Health Sciences
- Health Sciences, Shabnam Pejhan, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
- Information Technology Security, Shih-Chia Huang, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Nursing, Rasha Wahid, Faculty of Health Sciences

Graduate Faculty (I)

- Electrical and Computer Engineering & Software Engineering, Kundi Yao, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science

Emeritus Graduate Faculty (I)

- Modelling and Computational Science, Anatoli Chkrebtii, Faculty of Science

6.3 Graduate Thesis Completion Course* (I)

7. Termination

There being no other business, and upon a motion to terminate by F. Qureshi, the GSC Meeting terminated at 10:04 a.m.

Sandra Grouette, Assistant University Secretary