



**ACADEMIC COUNCIL
UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE (USC)**

**Minutes of the Public Session of the December 16, 2025 Meeting
via Videoconference
9:00 a.m. - 10:05 a.m.**

Undergraduate Studies Committee Agenda & Materials 2025-2026

Present:

Mehdi Hossein-Nejad,
Acting Chair
Wendy Barber
Jessica Boswell
Nicola Crow

Ana Duff
Christian Elia
Randy Fortier
Janet McCabe
Kimberley McCartney

Thomas McMorrow
Scott Nokleby
Jemma Tam
Adam Wingate

Regrets:

Mary Bluechardt, Holly MacPherson

Staff:

Kirstie Ayotte (Secretary)

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

The Chair called the Public session of the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and S. Nokleby provided their personal Land Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Agenda

The Acting Chair noted that K. McCartney had asked that Item 8.1 (Public Minutes of the Meeting of November 18, 2025) be removed from the Consent Agenda as there was a minor correction required in the Minutes.

A Member requested that an item of business arising from the minutes be added to the agenda. Given the full agenda, it was proposed to amend the agenda to add an "Other Business" item at the end of the meeting, to be addressed if time permitted, with the option to defer the matter to a future meeting if there was insufficient time.

Upon a motion duly made by J. McCabe and seconded by R. Fortier, the USC Agenda was approved as proposed, including approving and receiving the Consent Agenda and its contents and adding the other business item.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Acting Chair conveyed the Chair's thanks and appreciation to the Committee, extended Holiday well wishes, and noted that this was their final USC meeting as the Faculty of Business and IT representative. S. Nokleby also noted his upcoming leave to serve as Interim Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science and thanked the Committee.

4. Major Program Modifications (Recommendation)

4.1 Faculty of Business and IT: Bachelor of Commerce* (M)

A. Duff explained 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 inquired about offering it internally versus through OUAC, and M. Hossein-Nejad noted that a decision will be made at a later date in that regard.

Upon a motion duly made by A. Duff and seconded by S. Nokleby, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the Major Program Modification to add a new specialization in Economics to the Bachelor of Commerce program.

4.2 Faculty of Business and IT: Bachelor of Information Technology in Game Development and Interactive Media* (M)

A. Duff described 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.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Fortier and seconded by W. Barber, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of 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.

4.3 Faculty of Health Sciences: Bachelor of Health Science (Hons) in Medical Laboratory Science and Medical Laboratory Science – Bridge – Advanced Diploma in Biotechnology* (M)

J. McCabe noted that the proposed program changes respond to industry and regulatory exam changes, accreditation requirements, and student feedback, and prior program recommendations. 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 J. McCabe and seconded by R. Fortier, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of 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.

4.4 Faculty of Science: Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Computer Science* (M)

R. Fortier outlined updates to the Computer Science program, including core program changes, modifications to existing specializations, and two new specializations: Artificial Intelligence and Software Development. All specializations will include a special topics course, with additional course renumbering and updates.

A friendly amendment was proposed to rename the Digital Media specialization within the proposed program modification to Interactive Computing, and it was clarified that despite some course overlap with FBIT, the programs have distinct focuses.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Fortier and seconded by J. Tam, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Computer Science, including the amendment to rename the existing Digital Media specialization to Interactive Computing.

4.5 Faculty of Science: Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Physics – Computational Physics specialization* (M)

R. Fortier noted 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. Fortier and seconded by J. McCabe, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Physics program to add a new specialization in Computational Physics.

4.6 Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Communications and Digital Media Studies* (M)

T. McMorrow outlined two new Communications and Digital Media Studies (CDMS) specializations – Video Games, Creative Industries and Society, and AI for Professional Communications; and noted updates to the program's elective options.

Upon a motion duly made by T. McMorrow and seconded by W. Barber, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the Major Program Modification to add two new specializations - Video Games, Creative Industries and Society, and AI for Professional Communicators to the Communications and Digital Media Studies program – and to update elective options in the program.

4.7 Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Criminology and Justice – Advanced Entry* (M)

T. McMorrow explained that the Criminology and Justice Advanced Entry Pathway can now be completed fully online, leveraging existing online courses. He noted that this option aims to attract more advanced entry students by providing greater flexibility and accessibility.

Upon a motion duly made by T. McMorrow and seconded by R. Fortier, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the Major Program Modification to create a fully online option of the Advanced Entry pathway of the Criminology and Justice program.

4.8 Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and - Liberal Studies including Advanced Entry and GAS Transfer options, Liberal Studies minor* (M)

T. McMorrow explained 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. The Liberal Studies minor will be renamed Social Science, Humanities and Arts to align with these changes.

Upon a motion duly made by T. McMorrow and seconded by R. Fortier, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the Major Program Modification to change the name of all Liberal Studies program options to General Arts including the three-year and Honours programs and all related pathways, to make related adjustments to the program requirements, Program Learning Outcomes, and course prefixes, and to add two new specializations to the Honours program. USC further recommends the related name change of the Liberal Studies minor to Social Science, Humanities and Arts.

4.9 Faculty of Social Science & Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Political Science* (M)

T. McMorrow explained that a new Economic specialization is being added to the BA Honours in Political Science, with updates to program requirements and electives. He noted 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 T. McMorrow and seconded by A. Duff, the USC hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of 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 by requiring students to select one of POSC 4000U or POSC 4800U, and by replacing an inactive elective course with LGLS 1000U as a recommended elective.

5. Minor Program Modifications (Approval)

5.1 Faculty of Science: Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Mathematics for Science and Industry* (M)

R. Fortier advised that the program is making some previously required courses optional, increasing the total number of electives to six, two at the 4000 level, and adding two new electives.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Fortier and seconded by J. McCabe, the USC hereby approves the Minor Program Adjustment to the BSc (Hons) Mathematics for Science and Industry program, including reclassification of certain required courses as electives, an increase in the number of required electives, and the addition of new elective options.

5.2 Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Sociology, Technology and Innovation* (M)

T. McMorrow noted that the Sociology program is introducing a clearer focus on Technology and Innovation, with minor adjustments to the course map, including a new course and updates to electives.

Upon a motion duly made by T. McMorrow and seconded by S. Nokleby, the USC hereby approves the Minor Program Adjustment to the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Sociology, Technology and Innovation program (including the Advanced Entry option) to add additional courses with a technology focus and update elective offerings accordingly.

6. Academic Policy Instruments

6.1 Registration and Course Selection Policy Amendments* (D)

A. Wingate explained that the updates to the policy affect Graduate Students, specifically clarifying language surrounding continuous enrollment to reflect the growth of fee-per-credit programs. He advised that the changes provide clearer guidance for international students on structured program breaks, reduce the need for ad-hoc letters, and improve readability without altering the policy's intent. He noted that the policy was before USC for deliberation only.

A Member asked whether the revised policy language on non-continuous registration is clear enough for immigration purposes. A. Wingate responded that while it has not been formally assessed, consultations with International Student Services indicate the changes should be sufficient.

7. Impact Assessment – Change to Undergraduate Deadline to Withdraw from Courses* (I)

A. Wingate reported on the impact of aligning the undergraduate course drop deadline with the last day of lectures. He noted that this report was for information purposes only and was being provided out of courtesy by way of follow up to a prior enquiry. A. Wingate advised that the analysis indicated an initial increase in withdrawal activity following implementation, a significant reduction in late withdrawal appeals, a decline in failing grades and probation rates, and improved retention. Withdrawal activity has since stabilized, and the policy is consistent with practices at other Ontario Universities. Based on these findings, the current drop-date will remain in effect.

Members acknowledged positive outcomes such as reduced late withdrawal appeals, improved retention, and no adverse impact on program quality. Comments were also made on the effects of the late drop policy, including trends in withdrawal activity, late withdrawal appeals, failing grades, probation rates, and student experience. A Member raised several questions in which the Acting Chair reiterated that the item was presented to USC for informational purposes only as it was outside its purview and so had no scope for decision-making. The Acting Chair requested that any remaining questions be directed to the Registrar's Office via email to maintain the meeting's focus.

8. Consent Agenda (M)

The Chair confirmed that the contents of the Consent Agenda were approved and received under Agenda Item # 2 save for Item 8.1.

8.2 Course change(s):

[FSCI 4020U](#), [BUSI 32405U](#), [BUSI 3410U](#), [BUSI 3430U](#), [BUSI 3440U](#), [BUSI 3460U](#), [BUSI 4450U](#), [BUSI 4504U](#), [BUSI 3820U](#) [INFR 1300U](#), [INFR 4320U](#)

8.3 New course(s):

[BIOL 4090U](#), [FSCI 4090U](#)

8.4 Inactive course:

[HLSC 3462U](#)

8.5 New cross-listed courses:

[ENGR 1050U](#) (update), [SSCI 1050U](#)

Pulled from Consent Agenda:

8.1 Public Minutes of the Meeting of November 18, 2025* (M)

It was clarified that Section 6.1 from the Public Minutes of the Meeting of November 18, 2025, should read as follows:

“K. McCartney acknowledged the concern, noting that while some alignment is possible, differences in requirements and timing between accrediting bodies and the **Provincial** Quality Council often necessitate separate reviews. She emphasized that ongoing discussions and advocacy are underway to improve efficiency and minimize duplication wherever possible.”

Upon a motion duly made by S. Nokleby and seconded by J. Tam, the Public Minutes of the Meeting of November 18, 2025 were approved as amended with one objection noted.

One (1) Objection.

9. Other Business

A Member expressed a concern that they felt that they were unable to raise perceived errors or procedural inquiries related to the meeting minutes, in part due to the feedback their comments had received from other Members at the November meeting. The Acting Chair acknowledged the comments and noted the concern.

10. Adjournment (M)

There being no other business, and upon a motion duly made by S. Nokleby, the Public Session of the USC Meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Kirstie Ayotte, Assistant University Secretary