



Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee
Tuesday, September 24, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 10:27 a.m.

Via Google Meet

All Meeting Materials
[GSC Agenda – September 24, 2024](#)

MINUTES

- Present:** P. Mirza Babaei, (Chair), J. Abbas Dick, J. Arcand, R. Bailey, D. Bonetta, C. Cesaroni, A. Cooper, C. Davidson, K. Elgazzar, F. Gaspari, L. Harkins, S. Jackson, H. MacPherson, O. Marques, D. Papke, F. Quereshi, A. Tokuhiko, R. Van Oostveen, N. Wattie, K. Wilson, A. Wingate
- Staff & Guests:** K. Ayotte (secretary), S. Baglay, N. Crow, M. Heslip, A. Kassaris, K. McCartney, S. Windsor,
- Regrets:** K. Clarke, A. Kiani, L. Livingston, S. Marsh, A. Slane, J. Stokes,

Chair P. Mirza Babaei called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

S. Windsor read aloud the Land Acknowledgement.

1. Approval of the Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by F. Gaspari and seconded by J. Arcand, the agenda was approved as presented.

2. Approval of the minutes of the Meeting of June 25, 2024

Upon a motion duly made by L. Harkins and seconded by C. Cesaroni, the Minutes were approved as presented.

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

4. Comments from the Chair

P. Mirza-Babaei welcomed returning and new committee members, including Nicola Crow, Amanda Cooper, Ken Wilson, Krystina Clarke, and Acting Dean Joe Stokes, and expressed gratitude to former Dean Ted Christou. He noted that GSC Charing responsibilities will be shared between the SGPS Associate Deans during the transition. He then highlighted key items from his written report, including approximately 1,000 graduate students with 300 new students, as well as the September orientation attended by 250 students. He mentioned the upcoming Research Poster Showcase in November and C. Cesaroni added that the showcase will be hosted by the Downtown Campus aiming to help students develop presentation skills and encourage participation.

S. Windsor and C. Cesaroni also discussed an upcoming panel from the Supervisor Series that

will focus on mental health and wellness. It will address common concerns raised by supervisors and faculty, creating an interactive session that discusses mental health, emphasizing self-care and wellness strategies that will go beyond generic data, and focus on real-life case studies involving student scenarios. The goal is to provide practical guidance, identifying when to seek support and understanding boundaries for faculty involvement. Additional communication will be provided shortly.

Responding to a question regarding changing the date for the Research Poster Showcase, C. Cesaroni acknowledged the timing, but indicated that no matter what date was considered, there was a conflict.

P. Mirza-Babaei announced tuition deposit waivers for International research students are now being processed manually, with integration into the admissions system pending. H. MacPherson added that typically, students are required to pay a \$2000.00 non-refundable deposit when accepting their offer. However, this fee can be waived for research-funded students or course-based students with visa issues preventing their arrival for their intake semester, but the request must be submitted manually to SGPS for now. She noted that further information will be available on the SGPS website once available.

P. Mirza-Babaei also noted upcoming changes to Government policies on International student admissions, with further information pending from the Federal Government. In response to questions regarding the 10% change and International caps, P. Mirza-Babaei reiterated that the information from the Government is pending, and the University will update once more information received.

P. Mirza-Babaei concluded the Chair's Comments by expressing his gratitude to SGPS team the program directors and coordinators across all faculties for their dedication in supporting both our students and colleagues.

5. Major Program Modification

5.1 Faculty of Health Science – Master of Health Science (M)

N. Wattie presented the Master of Health Science Major Program Modification noting that the changes stem from the recent cyclical program review and faculty consultations aimed at modernizing the curriculum and attracting a broader student base. Key modifications include removing redundant core courses, adjusting the number of required electives, and introducing new core courses. Additionally, the independent project-based option will transition to a capstone course format within a broader course-based option for each field. These updates are intended to enhance the program's appeal and increase enrollment, particularly in the Kinesiology and Public Health fields.

He confirmed that there will be no changes to the total credit hours required for the Community Public Health field, but there will be a reduction in credit hours for the Kinesiology and Health field aligning with recommendations also stemming from the cyclical review and environmental scan of similar programs in Ontario.

In response to a question, N. Wattie confirmed that students starting in Fall 2024 can transition to the new program map, and that the department will be communicating these changes.

Motion:

Upon a motion duly made by J. Arcand and seconded by K. Elgazzar, the Governance & Nominations Committee hereby recommends to Academic Council the approval of the Major Program Modification to the Master of Health Science Program.

6. Academic Policy Instruments

6.1 Duolingo Policy (M)

H. Macpherson presented a proposal to accept Duolingo English testing on a one-year trial basis as a recommendation rather than a full policy change. She proposed an amendment to correct the required scores for MBA, MITS, and MFDA programs to 120 instead of 130, noting Health Science and Education programs will keep the 130 requirements. She advised that the Duolingo test costs approximately \$150 and provides results within 48 hours and is accepted by many Universities. Concerns were raised that other top institutions do not accept Duolingo, potentially harming the University's brand, and that the cost savings are minimal compared to overall student expenses. H. Macpherson emphasized that the use of Duolingo English testing was for a one year trial and provided an overview of the considerations taken into account in deciding on Duolingo English testing for this trial.

Members suggested enhancing English proficiency requirements for TAs through workshops and testing, aligning with other Universities' practices. It was proposed to separate TA language proficiency from general admission requirements. There was also a suggestion to limit the one-year Duolingo trial to non-thesis or shorter-term students to reduce long-term impact if unsuccessful. Discussion also took place on how the trial would be evaluated.

K. Elgazzar requested an amendment to ensure the trial is restricted to non-thesis-based students.

Motion:

Upon a motion duly made by N. Wattie, and seconded by R. Bailey, the Graduate Studies Committee hereby recommends to Academic Council, the approval of the Duolingo English Test from applicants of non-thesis-based programs as sufficient evidence of English language proficiency for a trial period of 2024-2025 admissions cycle, as amended.

The following are the recommended scores for Graduate Programs:

- *Health Sciences (MHSc), Education (MA, Med, EdD) – Minimum score of 130*
- *All other graduate programs – Minimum score of 120*

7. Reports

- i. Faculty of Business and IT
 - Enrollment numbers saw an increase this year and an additional welcome session was scheduled.
- ii. Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
 - Discussion regarding PhD applicants whose undergraduate degrees do not qualify for a corresponding master's program should be ineligible for admission, reflecting practices at other Canadian institutions.
 - Current minimum funding levels are insufficient to cover tuition costs, leading to poor academic performance. Ongoing discussions consider increasing funding to better support students, though no decisions have been made yet.
- iii. Mitch and Leslie Frazer Faculty of Education
 - Nothing to Report
- iv. Faculty of Health Science
 - Efforts are underway to enhance orientation and onboarding processes for MHSc and PhD students, including progress reports from day one and clear TA responsibilities.
 - Discussions in the initial stages about potentially introducing a new field in the MHSc program focused on Medical Laboratory Sciences, with a target launch of Fall 2026

v. Faculty of Science

- The Materials Science program is currently undergoing a cyclical review, with the documentation nearly complete and setting up timelines for the external visit and presentation to Faculty Council. The goal is to present the review in October, but if delays occur, November will be the latest. This review is being conducted in collaboration with Trent University, which has added some additional time due to the coordination required between the two institutions.
- Computer Science program reported 75 graduate students (61 full-time, 14 part-time) and 96 full-time faculty members, plus 81 Associates. The course offering challenges facing the program were noted with and noting the challenges it faces with course offerings with only seven courses in the fall and five planned for winter, missing key areas like software design and IT security. The need for Senior Leadership support was stressed.
- Applied Bioscience reported that they are currently in the process of conducting their program review as well as attempting to enhance the structure of student feedback reports to allow for more adequate communication from the faculty.

vi. Faculty of Social Science and Humanities

- See submitted written report.

vii. Graduate Student Report

- No update

viii. Library Report

- See submitted written report.

8. For Information

Associate Graduate Faculty

- Health Sciences, Mary Chiu, Faculty of Health Science
- Health Sciences, Stephen Hwang, Faculty of Health Science
- Health Sciences, Stephanie Felder, Faculty of Health Science
- Health Sciences, Jim Potvin, Faculty of Health Science
- Health Sciences, Lavern Bourne, Faculty of Health Science
- Health Sciences, Silvano Mior, Faculty of Health Science
- Health Sciences, Edward Osborn, Faculty of Health Science
- Health Sciences, Alvaro Joffre Uribe Quevedo, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Applied Bioscience, Marc Adler, Faculty of Science
- Computer Science, David Chandross, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Computer Science, Abdulaziz Almeahmadi, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Information Technology Security, Abdulaziz Almeahmadi, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Information Technology Security, Bernadette Schell, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Electrical and Computer Engineering, Peter Lewis, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Software Engineering, Peter Lewis, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
- Education, Bill Walters, Faculty of Education
- Nuclear Engineering, Rami El-Emam, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science

Graduate Faculty

- Computer Science, Cristiano Politowski, Faculty of Science

9. Other Business

H. Macpherson volunteered to provide the October Land Acknowledgement and C. Davidson volunteered to provide the November Land Acknowledgement.

K. Elgazzar proposed a topic for the next colleagues exchange to discuss faculty endorsements for each application before it goes to a supervisor to provide better insight and help prevent the hiring of unqualified candidates, especially for supervisors with less experience. He recommended that the Committee consider striking a sub-committee for this purpose.

L. Harkins inquired about the attendance of the Acting Dean at upcoming meetings. P. Mirza-Babaei confirmed that J. Stokes is invited to join, however, the current arrangement is for GSC Chairing to be done by SGPS Associate Deans, they will lead the discussions and provide updates to the Acting Dean. L. Harkins expressed concern about the indirect communication of issues, preferring direct involvement.

Termination

There being no other business, upon a motion duly made by S. Jackson the meeting adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Kirstie Ayotte, Assistant University Secretary

