



General Faculties Council  
**GRADUATE ACADEMIC PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE**  
Approved Minutes

May 23, 2023, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

via Zoom

***Voting Members***

Robin Yates, Co-Chair  
Kathryn King-Shier, Academic Co-Chair  
Amy Dambrowitz  
Jocelyn Hayley  
Rhiannon Jones  
Mary Grantham O'Brien  
Michael Wright

***Non-Voting Members***

Christine Johns  
Francine Smith

***Secretary***

Courtney McVie

***Meeting Secretary and Scribe***

Cherie Tutt

***Regrets***

Andy Knight  
Louise Wells  
Warren Wilson

***Invited Guests***

Rob Deardon, Associate Professor, Biostatistics, Department of Mathematics and Statistics – attended for Item 3  
Michael Kallos, Professor and Head, Department of Biomedical Engineering, Schulich School of Engineering – attended for Item 4  
Karen Kopciuk, Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Science – attended for Item 3  
Verity Turpin, (Vice-Provost, Student Experience) – present for Item 5  
Anthony Ware, Head, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Science – attended for Item 3  
Jingjing Wu, Graduate Program Director, Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Science – attended for Item 3

***Resource Personnel***

Kelly Hoglund, Partner, Program Innovation, Program Office – attended for Items 3 & 4  
Elizabeth Pando, Program Innovation Partner, Program Office – attended for Items 3 & 4  
Karen Quinn, Analyst, Planning and Reviews, Provost Office – attended for Items 3 & 4

The Co-Chair called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and confirmed quorum.

**1. Approval of the Agenda**

**Moved/Seconded**

That the Agenda for the May 23, 2023 Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee meeting be approved.

**Carried**

## **2. Remarks of the Co-Chairs**

Members were thanked for their efforts over the 2022-2023 meeting year and for taking additional time out of their schedules to attend and prepare for this additional meeting.

## **3. Recommendation of the Creation of the Specialization in Biostatistics within the MSc (course-based) in Mathematics and Statistics**

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda. Rob Deardon, Karen Kopciuk, and Tony Ware presented this item.

Highlights:

- The proponents provided an overview of the proposed Specialization in Biostatistics within the course-based MSc in Mathematics and Statistics, which will complement the existing thesis-based program. The program aims to prepare students to analyse “big data” problems and undertake high-end computational and statistical learning by training them in technical competency and ethical professional practices, while providing opportunities for skills internships. The program responds to student and labour market demand for graduate-level training in biostatistics while building on the existing Department programs offered internally and across the University.
- The Committee discussed:
  - The admission requirements for the Specialization and encouraged the program to consider if examples of specific courses should be included to indicate to students from different disciplines what prior preparation they need to be successful
  - The content of the Biostatistics 610 and 611 courses and that epidemiology is a core topic in the field of biostatistics
  - The focus on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility, in particular, related to program delivery and admissions practices
- In response to questions, it was explained that:
  - Planning for academic staff hires has been kept to a minimum as only three new courses will be created, and the Specialization will predominantly utilize courses currently being offered. It is anticipated that the Department can increase class sizes when necessary.
  - Biostatistics 610 and 611 will be open to students from other programs
- The Committee recommended:
  - That detail on the academic teaching capacity plan be added to the proposal to demonstrate how increasing enrollment will be managed
  - That the rationale for including undergraduate level pre-requisites for STAT 721 be added
  - That the tuition rate group, compounding interest for the 2025 tuition rate, the enrolment numbers, and the routing table dates be reviewed for accuracy and updated as needed
- The Committee suggested edits to the program requirement section for the Calendar entry to improve clarity. It was confirmed the Calendar entry will come back to Committee in Fall 2023 for approval.

**Moved/Seconded**

That the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee recommend that the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee approve the creation of the Specialization in Biostatistics within the Master of Science (MSc) (course-based) in Mathematics and Statistics, as set out in the proposal provided to the Committee with the required amendments.

**Carried****4. Recommendation of the Master of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering**

- A. Restructuring of the Master of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering from Thesis-based to Course-based**
- B. Recommendation of the Termination of the Master of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering (thesis-based)**

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda. Michael Kallos presented these items.

**Highlights:**

- The proponent provided an overview of the proposed restructuring of the Master of Engineering, Biomedical Engineering (BMEN) program that better aligns with industry needs and is open to a diverse range of students with engineering backgrounds. It was explained that the thesis-based program will be terminated, making way for a new, course-based program consisting of 30 units of coursework. This includes six 3-unit core courses and four 3-unit elective courses.
- In response to questions, it was reported that:
  - The program is currently planning for a steady state of 25 to 50 students, based on the Faculty's capacity to teach and support the program. As the new BME undergraduate program undergoes accreditation this year, the proposed master's program will begin on a small scale and grow based on the program's demand and its graduates' success. In response to this expansion, the department is actively seeking revenue to recruit designated BME academic staff to support the growth of the program.
  - The Schulich School of Engineering has hired four teaching stream academic staff members and will be increasing them to a full teaching load this year. In addition, an instructor stream hire is in progress, and it is hoped they will be in place by September. The program anticipates only utilizing one sessional during the first year.
- The Committee discussed the enrollment plan, support for the restructuring of this program and responding to growing demand in the medtech and healthtech industries, and academic teaching requirements
- The Committee recommended that the Calendar entry for the proposal be reviewed with the Registrar's office before being brought forward for approval in the Fall and that within the proposal it be clarified that existing faculty have the capacity to meet the teaching requirements for this program

**Moved/Seconded**

That the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee recommend that the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee approve the Restructuring of the Master of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering from Thesis-based to Course-based, as set out in the proposal provided to the Committee with the required amendment.

**Carried**

**Moved/Seconded**

That the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee recommend that the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee approve the Termination of the Master of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering (thesis-based), as set out in the proposal provided to the Committee.

**Carried****5. Changes to M.1. Supporting Documentation and the Use of a Statutory Declaration**

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda. Verity Turpin presented this item.

**Highlights:**

- The presenter provided an overview of the proposed change to the Academic Regulations Section M.1. Supporting Documentation and the Use of a Statutory Declaration noting that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the submission of supporting documentation for student absences was paused along with commissioner for oaths services, associated with the Statutory Declaration process. Now that the University is transitioning out of the pandemic and that effective June 2023 these Regulations will continue to be used, they need to be updated to reflect changes to operational processes for acquiring a statutory declaration. Utilizing this regulation will ensure a standardized process for supporting documentation across campus and it is hoped this will better support students. However, as the University no longer can offer commissioner of oath services, any information relating to the operational process for submitting a statutory declaration has been removed from the regulation.
- In response to questions, it was clarified that:
  - A student could still choose to submit a statutory declaration as supporting documentation, but there will not be a specific on campus service for students to get statutory declarations
  - A communication strategy will be created to continue consultations and to advise the community of update and that this regulation closely interweaves with Teaching and Learning considerations and includes how instructors should utilize this regulation and provide information in their course outlines
  - At this time, only the operational process is changing within the regulation, emphasizing the regulation is not being re-opened but is being utilized again as the pandemic moves to an endemic
  - The existing wording of the regulation provides students flexibility and discretion to choose the most appropriate type of documentation to support their situation
- The Committee discussed the proposed student declaration form, which is currently under development and learned the focus is on enhancing communication, with subsequent versions aimed at further refining the communication workflow. With the updated system, students will be able to securely enter their days missed and the reasons for their absence, ensuring the information is automatically and privately shared internally. In addition to improving communication, the system will monitor patterns of absences and utilize language that reflects a more supportive and inclusive approach.
- The Committee suggested that further work on the wording of the regulation is needed, as the current wording allows for too much interpretation. The Committee provided suggestions to the wording for consideration and suggested that guidelines for instructors would also be appreciated.

## **6. Annual Committee Performance Review and Review of the GAPS Terms of Reference**

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda. Robin Yates, Vice-Provost and Dean Graduate Studies, presented this item.

Highlights:

- The Co-Chair informed the Committee that a comprehensive review of the General Faculties Council (GFC) Standing Committee Terms of References will be happening in 2023-2024 and that any suggested changes can be sent to the Secretariat.
- An editorial change to the *Absence of Co-Chair* section in the General Faculties Council Standing Committees General Terms of Reference was suggested to change “act as Co-Chair for that meeting” to “act as Chair for that meeting”
- In response to the Committee performance review, the Committee discussed:
  - The type and quantity of documents included in academic proposals, such as what is within the main proposal and the appendices. It was explained that the inclusion of these items is essential for showcasing the evolution, providing an accurate representation, outlining the continuity of the development process, and meeting the requirements of the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee (APPC). It was suggested that tools, such as the addition of a table of contents and links to sections would improve clarity and allow for easier navigation.
  - The repetition of details and duplication of work created by the Ministry’s required templates. It was proposed that the Co-Chairs need to provide members with the governance lens that would allow for an understanding of the requirements of program approvals.
  - Increasing the effectiveness of proponent presentations by ensuring they focus on the high level-key points, without visual aids. It was noted that the Program Proposal Team meets with all presenters to provide expectations. It was suggested that restricting the option for visual aids and changing the language from presentation to discussion or ensuring presentations are within the five-slide limit might assist. Additionally, debriefing with or providing a letter to proponents could help change the tone of presentations.
  - Ways to ensure all members feel empowered in their ability to voice concerns and to vote independently to ensure only programs with the best chance for success move to the next approval stage
- The GAPS members were encouraged to bring forward any further feedback on operational pieces from this academic year to the Co-Chairs and to copy the Secretariat

## **7. Status of Program Approvals**

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda for information only. Questions can be directed to the Program Innovation Hub.

## **8. Other Business**

Robin Yates presented this item verbally.

- Kathryn King-Shier will be stepping down as Academic Co-Chair at the end of June. The General Faculties Council Executive Committee will appoint a replacement before the next meeting, and it will be announced at the beginning of the 2023-2024 meeting cycle.

- Kathryn King-Shier, Academic Co-Chair, Associate Dean Graduate, Faculty of Nursing, Jocelyn Hayley, Academic Co-Chair of the Academic Program Subcommittee, Department Head, Schulich School of Engineering, Rhiannon Jones, Associate Librarian, Libraries and Cultural Resources, Haskayne School of Business, and Michael Wright, Professor, Haskayne School of Business were thanked for their dedication and contributions to the Committee on this the occasion of their last meeting

## 9. Adjournment

**Moved/Seconded**

That the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee adjourn the May 23, 2023 meeting.

**Carried**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:11 a.m.

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Courtney McVie  
Secretary