

University of Waterloo
SENATE GRADUATE COUNCIL and
SENATE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL
Minutes of the January 13, 2026 Meeting

Present: Yasmeen Almomani, Micheal Beazley, Steven Bednarski, Raouf Boutaba, Sue Ann Campbell, Trevor Charles, Helen Chen, David Clausi, Charmaine Dean [Co-Chair], Ana Ferrer, Rob de Loë, Sara Hart, Alison Hitchens, Brian Ingalls, Christiane Lemieux, Suzanne Kearns, Tony Ly [Secretary], Lilhac Medina, Tizazu Mekonnen, Ian Milligan, Sushanta Mitra, Marina Mourtzakis, Kirsten Müller, Amir Nazemi, Carter Neal, Christopher Nielsen, Nicholas Pelligrino, Brad Pomeroy, Neil Randall, Ian Rowlands, Meray Sadek, Justin Wan [Co-Chair]

Resources/Guests: Melissa Benjamin, Paul Fieguth, Carrie MacKinnon Molson, Beth Sandore Namachchivaya, Marianne Simm, Gregory Smith

Regrets: Hassan Baaj, Sarah Burch, Richard Cook, Tom Duever, Vivek Goel, Peter Hall, Brian Laird, Todd Holyoak, Abhishesh Homagain, Misha Khan, Ellen MacEachen, Jeffrey Wilson, Stan Woo, Clarence Woudsma, Alfred Yu

Organization of Meeting: Charmaine Dean and Justin Wan took the chair and Tony Ly acted as secretary. The secretary advised that a quorum was present.

1. Governance Resources

This item was provided for information only.

2. Approval of Agenda

Council heard a motion to approve or receive for information the items on the agenda. Randall and Campbell. Carried.

2.1. Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

2.2. Approval of the Agenda

Council approved the agenda as distributed.

3. Regular Agenda

4. Co-Chair's Remarks

Dean provided an update on the Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA4) with the province. The approach for evaluation of each institution is currently being developed over the upcoming months. There was discussion on key performance metrics, including the corridors and research security requirements. Ten percent of funding will be tied to successful implementation of a research security plan. University of Waterloo representatives are participating in the consultation process and monitoring compliance attestations.

Dean mentioned that the Antagonism and Intimidation in Academia Speaker Series recently concluded successfully with strong attendance and community engagement. The series was discontinued due to budget constraints, but may continue in the future. Dean encouraged council members to connect with the Associate Deans of Research if there are any questions about the submission process for the Canada Impact+ Research Chairs program. Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA) is engaging with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to address significant international student processing delays.

5. Annual Report of the VPRI

Dean presented information from the Annual Report of the Vice-President, Research and International and highlighted a strong overall improvement in research related performance metrics. University of Waterloo has advanced from fifth to fourth place nationally in NSERC funding and is targeting third place with a goal of \$3 million in funding increase. CIHR performance is limited due to the absence of a medical school, renewed emphasis is being placed on SSHRC and international research. Industry funding has not yet recovered due to the loss of a major partner. Research security compliance has significantly improved, with no provincial or federal grant rejections in the past two years. Additional highlights included stable ethics submission numbers, a rebound in international travel, and continued leadership in innovation and entrepreneurship.

6. GSPA Updates

Wan provided an update on a new federal initiative, the Canada Impact+ Research Chairs program, which will support recruitment for top international doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows across eight strategic priority areas. University of Waterloo has received a strong allocation for applications, and the results are anticipated in April 2026. Council members were encouraged to nominate eligible students.

Wan provided an overview of the Graduate Student Experience Survey (SES), and council members were asked to encourage student participation. The current progress on the TA/RA unionization was reported. The forthcoming collective agreement will formalize hiring processes, increase consistency across campus, and involve HR support for graduate research assistant appointments. Operational implications remain pending final ratification.

7. Generative AI Consultation

Fieguth and Smith provided a presentation on the development of a university-wide Generative AI framework. AI usage among students has increased significantly, which emphasizes the urgency for coordinated institutional guidance. Proposed principles aligned with institutional values will be brought forward to Senate. Key discussion points included student assessment practices, academic program implications, ethical consideration, resources available for students, and meaningful engagement with the campus community.

8. Library Updates – Open Access, Research Needs, and Data Management

Namachchivaya and Hitchens provided an update about the library resources and services available at the university. Focus groups indicated strong demand for AI literacy training and research communication support. A new portal is available to provide centralized support and guidance for researchers. Integration with ORCID is underway. The library continues to invest heavily in electronic resources while maintaining some print acquisitions. Future priorities include AI literacy training, open access publishing, and research data management.

9. Items Removed from the Agenda

No item was removed from the consent agenda.

10. Proposed Future Items

A list of proposed future items for the Senate Graduate Council and the Senate Research and Innovation Council was distributed for information only. Council members were informed that there will be additional communication about the next joint Senate Graduate Council and Senate Research and Innovation Council meeting.

11. Other Business

No other items of business were identified.

12. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Senate Graduate Council will be held on January 21, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. in Needles Hall 3318. The next Senate Research and Innovation Council will be held on February 12, 2026 from 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. in Needles Hall 3318.