

University of Waterloo
SENATE GRADUATE COUNCIL
Minutes of the April 16, 2026 Meeting

Present: Mike Beazely, Helen Chen, Rob de Loë, Alison Hitchens, Abhishesh Homagain, Brian Ingalls, Brian Laird, Christiane Lemieux, Tony Ly [Secretary], Lilhac Medina, Tizazu Mekonnen, Carter Neal, Christopher Nielsen, Brad Pomeroy, Ian Rowlands, Meray Sadek, Justin Wan [Chair]

Resources/Guests: Whitney Barrett, Melissa Benjamin, Shawn Fluttert, Pam Gilbertson, Carrie MacKinnon Molson, Marianne Simm, Richard Wikkerink

Regrets: Steven Bednarski, David Clausi, Charmaine Dean, Tom Duever, Vivek Goel, Nicholas Pelligrino, Clarence Woudsma

Organization of Meeting: 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 of the consent agenda. Nielsen and Ingalls. Carried.

2.1. Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

2.2. Approval of the Agenda and Consent Items

Council approved the agenda as distributed.

2.3. Business Arising from the Minutes

The Chair noted that there is a memo about SACC distributed in the agenda package.

3. Consent Agenda

3.1. Minutes of the March 3, 2026 Meeting

Council approved the minutes of the meeting as distributed.

3.2. Curricular Submissions

Council approved all curricular submissions items 3.2.1. – 3.2.5. on behalf of Senate.

3.3. Graduate Awards and Scholarships

Council received for information and approved all new awards and scholarships.

3.4. Graduate Studies Academic Calendar Updates

Council received for information the updated Graduate Studies Academic Calendar.

4. Regular Agenda

5. Chair's Remarks

The Chair provided an update on the Canada Impact+ Research Chairs Program noting strong international interests from both PhD (50) and postdoctoral (63) applicants. The Chair noted that the applications were primarily from the STEM disciplines. A second application cycle is anticipated in Spring 2026.

The Chair provided an update on the TA/RA unionization process including the development of a new Workday and Quest integrated system that will be operational by June 2026. Discussion on the minimum PhD funding focused on cost-of-living and competitiveness with peer institutions. There were two funding recommendations provided to the Provost, which included a 2.8% (cost-of-living adjustment) and a 4.76% (expanded cost considerations) increase with implementation anticipated for Spring 2026.

6. Curricular Submissions

6.1. Faculty of Arts

Pomeroy provided an overview of the major modifications from the Faculty of Arts. The program changes reflect the Faculty of Arts reorganization process. Research fields are not required by the provincial government. Departments may choose to have the research fields included in the student transcripts.

A motion was heard to recommend that Senate approves the major modifications to the Master of Catholic Thought (MCT), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Applied Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philosophy, Master of Arts (MA) in Philosophy, and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Religious Studies programs for the Faculty of Arts, effective September 1, 2026, as presented. Pomeroy and Neal. Carried.

6.2. Faculty of Engineering

Nielsen presented the major modifications from the Faculty of Engineering, which included updates to the Master of Business, Entrepreneurship and Technology (MBET) and the Master of Management Science (MMSc) programs. The landscape has changed since the inception of the MBET program, and the revisions aim to update admission requirements and increase the number of courses required for the program. For the MMSc program, the number of electives has changed, and the online courses are only available for students enrolled in the program.

A motion was heard to recommend that Senate approves the major modifications to the Master of Business, Entrepreneurship and Technology (MBET) and the Master of Management Science (MMSc) programs for the Faculty of Engineering, effective September 1, 2026, as presented. Nielsen and Beazely. Carried.

6.3. Graduate Studies Academic Calendar Updates

Simm presented the changes for the Graduate Studies Academic Calendar. Updates for Section 13.2.3 was deferred at the previous Senate Graduate Council meeting. The updated document includes revised language to improve clarity and reduce ambiguity.

A motion was heard to recommend that Senate approves the major modifications to the 2026 Graduate Studies Academic Calendar, effective September 1, 2026, as presented. Wan and Laird. Carried.

7. EdTech Project and Fee Proposal

Fluttert and Gilbertson provided a presentation about the proposed EdTech student technology fee. Consultation was done with various stakeholders on campus such as Deans' Council, Undergraduate Student Relations Committee, and Graduate Student Relations Committee. Currently, there is a temporary protocol that was approved by the Provost. The initiative aims to centralize educational technology procurement, reduce duplication, improve cybersecurity oversight, and lower student out-of-pocket software costs through institutional licensing. The proposed 2-year pilot will introduce a mandatory fee, which is expected to range from \$10-25 per student. Council members raised questions regarding academic freedom, data sovereignty, privacy, fee allocation transparency, and implications for graduate students. There will be additional consultation with the Graduate Student Association, Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, and the Associate Deans.

8. Relationship between Supervisors and Graduate Students

Barrett provided a brief overview of the annual report from the Ombuds Office. The relationship between supervisors and graduate students was the most common concern raised by graduate students. The students coming to the Ombuds Office are often trying to navigate and balance their concerns with their supervisors and degree completion. The Ombuds Office is a resource on campus that can support students and help them understand the university policies. Key discussion points from council members included: communication breakdowns, power imbalances, and challenges navigating supervisory conflicts. Council members emphasized the need for clearer expectations, stronger supervisor training, early intervention mechanisms, and better support structures for both students and faculty members. The Chair highlighted a new working group on campus that will focus on graduate supervision with ongoing collaboration between GSPA and the Ombuds Office.

9. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

No item was removed from the consent agenda.

10. Other Business

No other items of business were identified.

11. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Senate Graduate Council will be held on May 25, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. in Needles Hall 3318.