Proposal for Special Standing Committees of Faculty of Arts & Science
Council: Special Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy and
Executive Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy

Tabled By: Agenda Committee of Faculty of Arts & Science Council
Version Date: December 4, 2019

Summary

Proposal for consideration

The Agenda Committee in consultation with the Dean’s Office and the Faculty Registrar and Director, Undergraduate Student Services, is proposing the creation of a two Special Committees of Council, in accordance with the powers of Council, to assess and recommend to Council several broad academic policy changes which do not fall in the purview of any existing Standing Committee of Council and which cannot reasonably be managed by any existing Standing Committee. This would entail a focus on broad academic policy and would not include policy on admissions, proposals concerning curriculum change (course or program of study proposals), proposals concerning the creation or disestablishment of

One Special Committee will be a full committee with membership of academic leadership, teaching staff, administrative and student support staff, and students. An Executive Committee is also recommended to be struck to assess the input of policy issues, recommendations, and draft proposals, to prioritize the agenda of this Special Committee and to ensure needed consultative steps. Both Committees will also actively harness the work of non-governance committees of the Faculty, including Teaching & Learning, First Year Foundations Council, and others, to help facilitate policy recommendations into formal proposals. This Special Committee will have a limited term ending July 30, 2021.

Policy Language or Statement

See Appendix A: Proposed Terms of Reference, Special Committee on Academic Policy

Rationale or Case for Action

The Faculty of Arts & Science governance has no effective way to manage change in broad, academic policy with the same accountability and assurance as it has in matters of curriculum change or admissions policy. The Faculty enjoys a robust array of non-governance or ad hoc committees, some of which were formed with a mandate to advise on matters including policy matters, but such committees sometimes do not have a formal governance committee where such policy projects may land and be developed into proposals for review, further consultation, and formal approval and recommendation to Arts & Science Council. In addition, no Standing Committee or current non-governance committee can easily
In the former governance structure of the Faculty, this issue was somewhat abated by the existence of many other standing committees, for example, committees dedicated to Instruction and Evaluation, or Academic Standards, which could develop and vet some kinds of policies to feed up to what was then called the General Committee – which in size and frequency in meeting is actually most analogous to current Faculty Council. Even then, past governance structures still had no nimble way within the actual governance structure itself to handle broad policy needs which either did not intersect with specific committee purviews – or which intersected many. Our current governance structure carried through this same situation, and in recent years, few broad policies that did not either connect with admissions or curriculum have been passed, and of those that did, they have had to be managed in a process of consultation across multiple committees, with no authoritative approving body before reaching Council.

This upcoming governance cycle can be dedicated not only to a long overdue assessment of many areas of policy but may also review of all existing Faculty policy with an eye to how such policies impact student mental health. Student mental health is a critical ongoing concern across post-secondary institutions, at the University as a whole, and of course at the largest Faculty. Other incremental changes in the landscape of student learning, student experience, and Faculty business processes and responsibilities also underpin a broad review. A dedicated group mandated by and accountable to Council will be best positioned to compile policy needs, assess those needs, and carefully consider the consequences of change. Council’s role is fundamentally about academic policy and regulation; it needs a dedicated arm to the task at hand.

Impact

Academic policy shapes and reinforces our key principles around the mission of the University and the Faculty, but of course also shapes the experience of our instructors, staff, and students. These experiences continue to evolve. There is a need to provide an opportunity to provide a place for much-needed reconsideration around, or recommendations concerning policy to land when the policy or policies in question extend past the purview of any current Standing Committee.

Such a Special Committee may not only be kept busy working on recommended policy changes, but can and should collaborate with existing ad hoc or non-governance committees to spur consultation and review of policies to ensure they are clear, transparent, understandable, not needlessly bureaucratic, and attuned to the mental health experiences of our students.

Consultation

The proposal to strike a Special Committee and Executive to the Special Committee was brought to the Agenda Committee by Faculty Registrar and Director of Undergraduate Academic Services and the Director, Faculty Governance. Further consultation included meetings of the Chairs, Principals and Directors (CPAD), Deans and Vice-Deans, the Consultation & Communication Group of the Faculty, and the Office of the Faculty Registrar. The proposal was also taken for consultation and feedback from Faculty Council in December 2019.
Implementation

Effective Date

On approval by Arts & Science Council for the striking of the Special Committees.

Implementation Timeline

Ideally, both the Executive Committee and Special Committee have first meetings in February, 2020, and meet regularly from there until disbanded as of June 30, 2021.

Approval Path

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Committee (Recommendation)</th>
<th>(proposed) February 3, 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Science Council (Approval)</td>
<td>(proposed) February 12, 2020</td>
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Appendix A: Proposed Terms of Reference for the Special Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy and Executive Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy

1 Membership
1.1 Composition

The Special Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy will have a total membership of 19 voting members and 1 non-voting member, and will draw widely on members of the wider Faculty community, including members who have experience either in current Standing Committees, in Arts & Science Council, or in Faculty non-governance committees where policy is regularly assessed. The goal is to ensure broad representation from academic leadership across sectors and Colleges, teaching and administrative staff, and students. The composition is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Arts &amp; Science or delegate (ex officio, voting)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of ASSU</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Registrar and Director of Undergraduate Academic Services (ex officio, non-voting) (Vice-Chair)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Unit Leadership (Department, College, EDU:A) including at least one College Principal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff, including at least one College Registrar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
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The Executive Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy will have a much smaller membership to focus on assessing the inflow of policy needs, predominantly representing leadership both in the Faculty, leadership on non-governance Committees and Standing Committees, and leadership representing student experience and administrative expertise.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of ASSU</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs of Governance or Non-Governance Committees</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Registrar (non-voting)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2 Selection of Members
The Agenda Committee of Arts & Science Council will accept nominations both for the Special Committee and its Executive Committee. The Agenda Committee will consider broad representation for the Special Committee and consider a balance of sectoral representation (humanities, sciences, social sciences), broad administrative experience (College, academic unit), and robust student voices. Previous experience either on governance or non-governance committees will also be considered, especially if experience in policy consideration is present, but that will not be an absolute requirement.

The Agenda Committee will consider, where possible, representation from all constituencies for special Executive Committee, but the goal is a smaller and more nimble body. With respect to faculty member representation, the aim will be to draw wherever possible from those serving in leadership roles in ad hoc/non-governance committees and governance committees.

1.3 Term
Terms will be for the duration of the Special Committee and its Executive Committee themselves until the date when it is disbanded: June 30, 2021. (See 3.3 below, Duration.)

1.4 Chair and Vice-Chair
The Chair for the Special Committee will be selected from among the members of the committee who represent Academic Unit Leadership. The Vice-Chair will be the Faculty Registrar and Director of Student Academic Services.

The Chair for the Executive Committee will be the Dean or designate, and the Vice-Chair will be elected by membership from the members representing the Chairs of other Committees, or representing Academic Leadership (Chairs, Principals, and Program Directors) within the Executive Committee.

1.5 Non-Member Expertise
As with all Committees of Council, these Special Committees will, as needed, request the presence of staff to share expertise as it relates to specific policy considerations, or to request needed data, or both.

2 Quorum
For the Special Committee, one third of the members (7), of which at least one must be a member of the Academic Unit leadership, and two (2) must be of teaching staff, will constitute quorum.

For the Executive Committee, quorum will be one-third of the members, of which one must be a Chair of a Governance or non-Governance committee.
3 Function

3.1 General Mandate of the Special Committee and the Executive Special Committee

The Special Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy will be responsible for monitoring, assessing change to, and approving (or recommending for approval) divisional academic policies and amendments to such policies, for its duration and with exceptions as listed in Section 4.2, Out of Scope, below. As per the Faculty of Arts & Science Constitution (III-2), “Academic policy sets out the principles for, the general direction of, and/or priorities for the teaching and research activities of the Faculty.”

The Executive Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy shares this scope but its focus will be on receiving and assessing proposals or issues raised regarding policy, determining the priorities for review by the Special Committee, and identifying needed areas of consultation or research while ensuring such consultation or research does not duplicate work already being performed by any current non-governance or Standing Committee of the Faculty of Art & Science.

3.2 Delegated Authority

In establishing this Special Committee, Council is vesting authority to assess proposals for policy change and to judge whether such proposals are a matter of academic policy or may be a change to procedure and process, which would fall under operational changes and not be considered a change in policy in and of itself. This authority is restricted to certain areas of responsibility and there are some aspects of policy not in its purview; see Section 4.2 below.

The Special Committee may not approve Faculty-wide policy change but may move to recommend policy change for the Faculty of Arts & Science Council. Moreover, the expected policy change approval process – which for most Faculty-wide changes will advance for approval or recommendation to the Committee on Academic Policy & Programs\(^1\) – will remain in place. Finally, the Special Committee will present any operational changes it reviewed to the Faculty of Arts & Science Council for information.

3.3 Consultative Mandate

The special Executive Committee will serve as a primary body to ensure that any proposals or issues sponsored or brought forward for the Special Committee has enjoyed wide consultation with governance and non-governance committees of the Faculty, working groups, and appropriate bodies including but not limited to: CPAD, College Principals, College Registrars, Tri-Campus representatives, the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, and other ongoing consultative forums including Consultation & Communication. As needed, both the Executive Committee and the Special Committee can request data to analyze the impact of proposed policy considerations more closely.

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\(^1\) The Terms of Reference for the Committee on Academic Programs & Policy (AP&P) affirm that proposals which would have a major significance across a division are subject to approval by AP&P. In general, minor amendments to divisional policy that are either consistent with University-wide policy or which may be considered not to have a major impact on the division may be able to be approved by divisional councils and reported for information either to the Provost or to AP&P.
3.4 Duration
This Special Committee and its special Executive Committee will be constituted as of its approval by Arts & Science Council and remain active until June 30, 2021.

3.5 The Case for a Special Committee
As per Section V.2 of the By-Laws of the Faculty of Arts & Science Council, Council may establish Special Committees if the need fits one or more of the following criteria:

a) An issue cannot be accommodated easily within a Standing Committees;
b) An issue does not fall readily under an existing Standing Committee;
c) There is need for the participation of experts not represented on the relevant committee.

This Special Committee meets the first two criteria.

- There is no Standing Committee that can reasonably accommodate the scope of broad academic policy. Previous efforts to approve items of Faculty-wide policy have had to receive feedback from multiple committees and then be sponsored by a Vice-Dean directly for Council.
- No current Standing Committee has the mandate to deal with broad academic policy. Committee on Admissions is mandated to consider and recommend admissions-related policy, and Undergraduate Curriculum Committees formally only recommend changes to programs and courses, though they do meet to consider and offer advice on issues of broad Faculty policy. Committee on Standing/Academic Appeals Board often considers regulatory matters related to petitions and appeals but does not have the mandate to formally propose changes to regulation – though it can and does recommend areas where change may be required.
- There is no formal governance body of Council to partner with and provide a “landing” for recommendations on policy that arise from non-governance committees including, for example, Teaching & Learning and the First Year Foundations Council.

4 Areas of Responsibility

4.1 In Scope
This Special Committee will focus on policies that include but are not limited to:

- Faculty-wide policies regarding course standing and academic standing;
- Faculty implementation and regulation regarding the University’s Grading Practices Policy;
- Academic or regulatory appeal processes;
- Divisional examination and grading practices;
- Transcript notations within degree programs;
- Overall changes to degree requirements.

The scope will be focused on policies that impact undergraduate students as the School of Graduate Studies oversees regulations around graduate students in Arts & Science.

4.2 Out of Scope
- Admissions policy (to the Faculty or to programs of study);
• Establishing, changing, or closing extra-departmental unit (EDUs)s or departments;
• Changes to courses and programs of study.

In all these cases, oversight is either provided by a current Standing Committee or has been delegated to administrative oversight.

5 Procedures
Once established, the Faculty governance team will arrange a minimum of one meeting of two-hours once a month for both the Executive Committee and the Special Committee starting February 2020, with an extra preliminary meeting to review terms of reference, meeting procedures, and to examine an initial overview of the needed policy work.

Both Committees will have the option to meet in the May to August period, but given Council will not be meeting, this would be to continue consultative and development process of possible academic policy.

If the work needed indicates more frequent meetings would be necessary, and with approval of the Special Committee itself, the Faculty governance team would work to schedule further meetings.

The Faculty Governance team will work to compile a list of academic policy issues or proposals, as submitted, to the Executive Committee, who will in turn ensure proper consultation has been undertaken and set the Agenda for the Special Committee for its monthly meetings.