FOR APPROVAL

TO: Arts & Science Council

SPONSOR: Thomas MacKay, Director, Faculty Governance, on behalf of the Agenda Committee

CONTACT INFO: thomas.mackay@utoronto.ca

DATE: February 5, 2020 for February 12, 2020

AGENDA ITEM: 8

ITEM OF BUSINESS:
Special Committee of Arts & Science Council on Academic Policy

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:
Section V.2 of the By-Laws of the Faculty of Arts & Science Council says that “… Council may find it useful to establish Special Committees to consider particular issues. Special Committees are normally formed on the recommendation of the Agenda Committee, when one or more of the following conditions exist:

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.”

GOVERNANCE PATH:

HIGHLIGHTS:

This Special Committee has been proposed to allow the Faculty of Arts & Science to use a governance body to examine, assess, and recommend for approval items of broad academic policy which currently do not realistically or effectively fit in the mandate of existing Standing Committee of Council. This is intended to allow thorough governance oversight of policy items overdue for assessment and possible change, but also to partner with Faculty-wide processes examining existing policy through the lens of supporting good student mental health.

This Special Committee will receive from and partner with policy initiatives that arise from both governance and non-governance bodies of the Faculty and will ensure rich and systematic consultation with all constituencies with respect to proposed changes, including all such bodies. In alignment with this mission, the membership of the Special Committee will include faculty members and teaching staff, including members of academic leadership in the Faculty; administrative staff; and undergraduate students.

The scope of policy is limited to academic policy impacting undergraduate students, and can include:

- 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 Special Committee will not consider Admissions policy; changes to (including creation or disestablishment of) extra-departmental units (EDUs); or changes to curriculum including courses and programs of study. These are effectively overseen by existing Standing Committees.

The term of this Special Committee is slated to be effective immediately on approval by Arts & Science Council (no earlier than February 12, 2020) and will work until June 30, 2021. This allows the Committee to work on immediate needs, and be present to support policy initiatives that emerge both at the end of this Fall/Winter Session, and what emerges from the next Fall/Winter Session, allowing time for other policy initiatives to enjoy a full opportunity for development, consultation, and finalization.

NOTION OF MOTIONS:

**Be It Resolved**
THAT the Committee on Academic Policy be established as a Special Committee of Arts & Science Council, effective February 12, 2020 until June 30, 2021.
Proposal for Special Standing Committee of Faculty of Arts & Science Council: Special Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy

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<tr>
<th>Tabled By</th>
<th>Agenda Committee of Faculty of Arts &amp; Science Council</th>
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<tr>
<td>Version Date</td>
<td>February 3, 2020</td>
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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 Special Committee 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 extra-departmental units (EDUs).

This Special Committee will be a full committee with membership of academic leadership, teaching staff, administrative and student support staff, and students. This Special Committee will review and propose policy change for policies that have been previously discussed and consulted on at 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 June 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 manage certain policy issues within their stated mandates.

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. In this way, major policy overhauls were often managed by a dedicated taskforce – in effect, a kind of special committee, though convened outside of governance structures – to take a long-term, systematic approach to major issues, which in turn would be pulled together as reports of recommendations, which in turn would come to Council as formal proposals.

Our current governance structure still does not have a place for broad academic policy, 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 encourage, support, and even in some cases facilitate a 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 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 11, 2019 and with the Arts & Science Student Union Executive on December 13, 2019.

**Implementation**

**Effective Date**

| On approval by Arts & Science Council, anticipated February 12, 2020. |

**Implementation Timeline**

| The Special Committee will seek and establish membership as quickly as possible to begin meetings either in late February or early March 2020 and meet regularly from there until disbanded as of June 30, 2021. |

**Approval Path**

| Agenda Committee (Recommendation) | (proposed) February 3, 2020 |
| Arts & Science Council (Approval) | (proposed) February 12, 2020 |
Appendix A: Proposed Terms of Reference for the Special 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>
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<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 with at least one College Principal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff with at least one senior representative from a College</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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1.2 Selection of Members
The Agenda Committee of Arts & Science Council will accept membership nominations for the Special 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, and student voices. Previous experience either on governance or non-governance committees will be an asset, especially if experience in policy consideration is present, but that will not be an absolute requirement.

1.3 Term
Terms will be for the duration of the Special Committee, that is, 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.

1.5 Non-Member Expertise
As with all Committees of Council, this Special Committee 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 voting members (7), of which at least one (1) must be a member of the Academic Unit leadership, two (2) must be of teaching staff, and one (1) must be an undergraduate student, will constitute quorum.

3 Function
3.1 General Mandate of the Special Committee
The Special Committee on Undergraduate Academic Policy will be responsible for assessing change to, and 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.”

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 & Programs1 – 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
This Special Committee will ensure that any proposals or issues sponsored or brought forward has enjoyed wide consultation with governance and non-governance committees of the Faculty, working

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.
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, the Special Committee can request data to analyze the impact of proposed policy considerations more closely.

3.4 Duration
This Special 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) 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 first meeting for the Special Committee as soon as possible after membership is confirmed, whether February or early March 2020. That meeting will focus on a review of terms of reference, meeting procedures, and to examine an initial overview of the needed policy work. A preliminary schedule of subsequent meetings will be established as well.

The Committee will have the option to meet in the May to August period, but given Council will not be meeting, this is not assumed. If the Committee did meet it would be to continue consultative and development process of possible academic policy changes.