

Senate Committee on Academic Development

Report to Senate - Meeting of March 25, 2014

Report to Senate on

***Policy and Procedures for the Closure of Academic Programs
(Undergraduate or Graduate)***

The attached *Policy and Procedures for the Closure of Academic Programs* were drafted in response to a Motion passed at Senate on March 19, 2013:

Moved by Senator Harrison, seconded by Senator Brouwer that Senate request that the Senate Committee on Academic Development (SCAD) develop for the consideration of Senate, a policy for the closure of an academic program.

In response to this request, SCAD considered this referral at all of its meetings from April 2013 to March 2014.

In November 2013 SCAD established a Sub-Committee to focus on this matter, comprised of: L. Daneshmend (SCAD Chair), I. Duchaine (SCAD member), J. Emrich (SCAD member), P. Oosthuizen (SCAD member), I. Reeve (SCAD SGPS Observer), C. Reinholtz (SCAD QUFA Observer) and A. Williams (SCAD AMS Observer). The Sub-Committee met five times from November 2013 to March 2014 and reported to SCAD on a monthly basis.

Broad feedback on the penultimate draft of the policy was solicited from a number of stakeholders, including all Senators, in February 2014, and representatives from various groups across campus were invited to speak to the matter at the March 5, 2014 meeting of SCAD. The Sub-Committee met to finalize this policy on March 7, 2014 and the resulting final draft of the policy was endorsed by all four voting members of SCAD on the Sub-Committee. The final draft was then circulated by email to the whole of SCAD for review, and was approved by majority: there was one dissenting vote.

Analysis and Discussion

In formulating this policy, SCAD noted that:

- 1) Based on a review of best practices for Program Closure at other Canadian universities, it is imperative that there is consistency between the governance processes for Program Creation and Closure. This is particularly well conveyed by the University of Toronto's [statement](#) that:

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- a) *Proposals for program or program component closures such as graduate program fields, or concentrations, or undergraduate program streams are subject to the same governance that the creation of the same program or program component is subject to*
- 2) With respect to the [Senate Recommended Procedures Concerning the Temporary Suspension of Admissions to Academic Programs](#) (approved by Senate May 28, 2013):
 - a) Any Closure policy should complement the Temporary Suspension policy.
 - b) The Temporary Suspension policy already provides the Deans of Faculties and Schools with an effective and flexible mechanism with which to respond, in a timely manner, to any time-critical or unforeseen circumstances which require temporary suspension of admissions.
 - c) Thus, if necessary, the Deans have the discretion to move forward expeditiously with a temporary suspension, which then, if appropriate, provides the time and opportunity for more careful deliberation and consultation leading to initiation of the process for Program Closure.
- 3) The protection of the interests of faculty members in circumstances of Program Closure is already explicitly addressed in *Article 39 (Closure of an Academic Program or Unit for Academic Reasons)* of the of the 2011-15 Collective Agreement between Queen's University and Queen's University Faculty Association.
 - a) Hence any Senate policy on Program Closure must not infringe upon that article of the Collective Agreement.
- 4) The protection of the interests of students who might be impacted by any program closure should be a guiding principle.

Much of SCAD's deliberations on this Closure Policy centred on how an "Academic Program" should be defined for the specific purposes of this policy:

- The initial direction taken by SCAD was to replicate the definition in the [Senate Recommended Procedures Concerning the Temporary Suspension of Admissions to Academic Programs](#) (approved by Senate May 28, 2013). However, upon closer inspection, in particular with reference to item 1(a) above, that definition was deemed to be both incomplete and unclear.
- The new definition, as finalized in the Closure Policy, has the merit of clarity in terms of interpretation, and also fulfills the requirement of item 1(a) above with respect to governance processes. It states:
 - *A program is the complete set and sequence of courses, combinations of courses and/or other units of study, research and practice prescribed by Queen's University for the fulfillment of the requirements of a degree, diploma, or certificate. For the purposes of this policy, this is limited to any program designation that appears on a student's transcript.*
- SCAD acknowledges that the level of granularity/detail which is captured by this definition may appear onerous to Faculties and Schools, in terms of the reporting, engagement, and communication which it entails. However, SCAD is of the view that anything coarser than this level of granularity would not meet the objective as stated in item 1(a) above. SCAD further noted that much of the documentation

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and due diligence required under the application of this definition of Program Closure is already required at the levels of Faculty Boards and GSEC.

- A dissenting opinion was voiced regarding the above definition, which argued for the retention of the following sentence, which had been incorporated in an earlier draft of definition: “*However, graduate fields which appear on graduate student transcripts are excluded from the scope of this policy*”. The majority of SCAD’s members rejected this, primarily on the basis of consistency of treatment of undergraduate and graduate programs.

As a consequence of the approval of this Closure Policy, SCAD recommends the following actions:

- I. Revision of the [Senate Recommended Procedures Concerning the Temporary Suspension of Admissions to Academic Programs](#) (approved by Senate May 28, 2013), and so that the definition of a program is consistent with this Closure Policy (and removal of any references to academic “plans”).
- II. The Senate Committee on Academic Procedures (SCAP) should recommend to Senate a policy on the content of the student transcript, including program designations. This is motivated by the fact that the scope of application of the Closure Policy depends heavily on what appears on academic transcripts.

M o t i o n

that Senate approve the *Policy and Procedures for the Closure of Academic Programs (Undergraduate or Graduate)* effective immediately.

Respectfully submitted,



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Chair, Senate Committee on Academic Development

Committee Members:

H. Abdollah, Medicine
L. Anstey, PhD'15, Education
L. Daneshmend, Deputy Provost (Chair)
I. Duchaine, BAH'14 (History)
J. Emrich, Faculty of Law

A. Gill, BCom'15
D. Hutchinson, Geo Sciences & Geo Engineering
A. Jack-Davies, Health Counseling & Disability Services
K. McAuley, Chemical Engineering
P. Oosthuizen, Academic Colleague

Policy and Procedures for the Closure of Academic Programs (Undergraduate or Graduate)

Scope

This policy applies to Senate approved programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The policy is restricted to situations where *Article 39 (Closure of an Academic Program or Unit for Academic Reasons)* of the of the 2011-15 Collective Agreement between Queen's University and Queen's University Faculty Association, or any successor provision or provisions in subsequent Collective Agreements, does not apply.

Requests for closure of an Academic Program will not be considered unless admissions to the Program have already been temporarily suspended following the [Senate Recommended Procedures Concerning the Temporary Suspension of Admissions to Academic Programs](#) (Approved by Senate May 28, 2013). An exception will be made for Academic Programs to which admissions were *de facto* suspended prior to May 28, 2013.

Definition of a Program

A program is the complete set and sequence of courses, combinations of courses and/or other units of study, research and practice prescribed by Queen's University for the fulfillment of the requirements of a degree, diploma, or certificate. For the purposes of this policy, this is limited to any program designation that appears on a student's transcript.

Definition of Closure

Closure of a Program is defined as the formal termination, approved by Senate, of the Program. Termination encompasses closure of admissions, and deletion from the relevant academic calendar(s).

Policy Statement

There are a number of possible reasons for closing an existing academic Program. These may include: low enrolment, a changing disciplinary landscape, poor quality of the academic program, reprioritization and/or changes in resource allocation. The recommendation to close an Academic Program may be articulated in a Cyclical Program Review (CPR) review team report or may be identified by members of the university community, for example the Dean, Associate Dean and/or the Unit itself. Closure of a Program is a significant step: and as such, appropriate and thorough consultation and relevant supporting data are essential in order to enable informed, and transparent, decision making.

Protection of Students as a Guiding Principle

- Closure should not result in students being unable to complete, if they so wish, the Program they are registered in, within the standard time to completion for that Program.
- In the specific case of students enrolled in Graduate Programs, the timing and roll-out of any closure must not prevent them from completing the courses, examinations, training, and research necessary to graduate, nor interfere with their commitments of financial support (i.e. all relevant components of overall internal and external funding packages –

e.g. scholarships, bursaries, Queen's Graduate awards, Graduate Research Assistantship or employment as Teaching Assistant / Teaching Fellow / Research Assistant, etc.).

- In some Graduate Programs, particularly at the Ph.D. level, completion times may extend beyond the standard time. Hence a graduate student may have completed all their degree requirements, except for defence and submission of their thesis, by the time a Program closes. In such cases, the degree issued and the transcript notation will reflect the original program name or an alternative that takes into account the needs and wants of the student.

Potential considerations in assessing the case for closure of an undergraduate or graduate Program may include but are not limited to the following:

- loss (or impending or anticipated loss) of professional accreditation
- poor or diminished quality of academic offerings (e.g. impending negative report from Cyclical Program Review)
- low enrolment that might jeopardize the academic quality of the Program
- inadequate applicant pool and yield to meet enrolment targets
- unavailability of faculty or facilities that results in a compromised ability, or inability, to deliver a Program of high quality
- unavailability of faculty that results in breach of workload agreements if available faculty are required to take on extra workload to allow a Program of high quality to be offered
- whether or not the distinctiveness of the Program warrants its preservation
- diminished relevance of the Program in relation to changes in the academic discipline
- scope of the possible impact of closure
- compatibility with the strategic direction of the Academic Unit/Faculty/University
- the Program is no longer consistent with the University's academic objectives, priorities and existing strengths
- changes and/or constraints in resource allocation
- societal need for the Program

Proposal

A proposal for a Program closure must address the following points comprehensively:

- A. Rationale for the closure
- B. Impacts on, and plans for accommodation of, any students currently enrolled in the Program
- C. Impacts on program(s) students may transfer into in order to complete their degree
- D. Impacts on time-to-completion
- E. Impacts on staff and faculty members involved in the delivery of the Program
- F. Impacts on the nature and quality of the Unit's programs of study
- G. Impacts on other cognate units and inter-institutional agreements/contracts (if applicable)
- H. Impacts on shared services and/or resources (e.g. library resources, physical facilities , IT resources)
- I. Impact on the equity goals of the Academic Unit/Faculty/University
- J. Impacts on the overall academic mission of Queen's University

- K. For combined or joint programs with other institutions, in cases where the partner institution withdraws, demonstration that Queen's University has made reasonable efforts to find a new partner which can provide the resources or expertise required to support the program.

Institutional Process

Proposals for the closure of an existing Program will be subject to the following sequence of internal University approval processes. The relevant Dean(s) is/are responsible for initiating and executing the following process steps:

1. Preliminary consultation with students, faculty, staff, other academic units and external stakeholders, and the Provost.
2. Draft proposal for Program closure initiated by Unit and/or Faculty/School.
3. Draft proposal sent to Provost's Office for preliminary discussion. For Graduate Programs, the proposal will be sent concurrently to the School of Graduate Studies.
4. Draft proposal presented by relevant Dean(s) for information and discussion at the relevant Faculty Board(s) (and in the case of Graduate Programs, at GSEC).
5. Draft proposal is presented by relevant Dean(s) for information to Senate.
6. Proposal is developed further by Unit in conjunction with the relevant Faculty/School.
 - During this phase broad consultation will take place with students, faculty, staff, other academic units and external stakeholders.
 - The proposed date for discontinuing or phasing out an Academic Program will take into consideration the time required for anticipated completion by students currently enrolled or for facilitation of their placement in acceptable alternative programs
7. Final proposal is signed off by Provost
8. Students currently enrolled in the Program are notified of the proposed Program closure and timing for phasing out of the Program
9. Final proposal approved by relevant Faculty Boards and GSEC
10. Final proposal approved by Senate Committee on Academic Development (SCAD)
11. Final proposal is submitted to Senate by SCAD for approval.

Solely in the case of combined or joint programs involving an external partner institution, it is understood that if the other institution decides to withdraw from its partnership with Queen's, the Provost may waive the requirement that admission to the program be suspended before the closure process is initiated.

External Reporting

Program closures are reported annually to the COU Quality Council and the MTCU by the Office of the Provost for information.