

670TH MEETING OF SENATE
FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2025, 1:30 P.M.
MCGREER 100 AND BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

MINUTES

Chair: Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier

Present: Dr. Hafid Agourram, Dr. Eva Bures, Leana Ceresoli, Julien Collin, Dr. Bruno Courtemanche, Dr. Julie Desjardins, Alpha Diallo, Dr. Anthony Di Mascio, Dr. Valerio Faraoni, Fiona Gaombalet, Dr. Kerry Hull, Catherine Lavallée-Welch, Dr. Heather Lawford, Alex Mador, Dr. Jean Manore, Dr. Patrick McBrine, Dr. Matthew Peros, Dr. John Ruan, Hans Rouleau, Dr. Cranmer Rutihinda, Chelsea Sheridan, Dr. Michael Teed, Dr. Maxime Trempe, Dr. Yanan Wang, Dr. Andrew Webster, Dr. Dawn Wiseman

Regrets: Sonoma Brawley, Sophia Driscoll, Dr. Jessica Riddell

Invitee: Gary McCormick

Guests: **University of The Bahamas**
Nicolette Bethel, PhD, Professor, Chair, Academic Senate
Denise Barnes, Vice-President of Human Resources

Secretary: Geneviève Gagné

Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier formally opened the 670th meeting at 1:37 p.m., welcoming representatives from the University of The Bahamas to the Senate. He also introduced Chelsea Sheridan as the new Vice-President of Academic Affairs of the Students' Representative Council and Robert Palmer as the interim Dean of the Williams School of Business, with Dr. Margaret Shepherd set to start her mandate on March 17, 2025.

669/1 AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

Moved by: Andrew Webster

Seconded by: Leana Ceresoli

Motion carried.

669/2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2.1 MINUTES OF THE 669TH SENATE MEETING

The Minutes of the 669th meeting of Senate, held on January 24, 2025, were approved as presented.

Moved by: Andrew Webster

Seconded by: Alex Mador

Abstention: 1

Motion carried.

669/3 BUSINESS ARISING

Vice-Principal Academic and Research Dr. Andrew Webster indicated that Item 6.6, concerning the Adjustment of Course Syllabi discussed at the January 24, 2025, Senate meeting, will be addressed under Item 5.1 Academic Standing and Admissions Policy.

669/4 COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Strategic Planning

Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier opened his remarks by referencing the March 13, 2025, Townhall on the strategic planning exercise. He noted that the Board of Governors had formally adopted Bishop's new *Mission, Vision, Values, Goals and Strategies* during a special meeting held on March 11, 2025. The next phase involves developing an action plan to guide their implementation. As part of this process, he encouraged participation in the April 2, 2025, workshops, which will focus on Goal 2b of the *2025–2029 Strategic Plan: Prioritize the most beneficial components of our unique community experience*. Relevant Strategic Planning documents are available on SharePoint.

The Principal acknowledged the challenges posed by the University's financial situation and emphasized the importance of continued dialogue as the institution reflects on its future direction. He expressed appreciation to all members for their engagement during this exceptionally demanding year.

Government Relations

Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier described the challenges created by the introduction of provincial quotas on international students under *Bill 74*. He acknowledged that the decline in international applications is being felt across the sector. The University is actively managing this quota to minimize detrimental impacts and maintain diversity within the student body.

The Chair expressed concerns over the government's conflation of international students with broader immigration policy in the context of its *Planification pluriannuelle de l'immigration*. While universities are preparing to engage in this process, little progress is anticipated, despite a united stance and ongoing advocacy efforts.

Principal Lebel-Grenier concluded his remarks with the ongoing discussion on Curriculum and Academic Structures review mentioning that papers have been circulated. Members were encouraged to review the document, as the topic remains central to the ongoing academic planning.

669/5 COMMITTEE ITEMS

5.1 ACADEMIC STANDING AND ADMISSIONS POLICY (ASAP)

Registrar Hans Rouleau reported that the Academic Standing and Admissions Policy (ASAP) Committee has been actively meeting to discuss three key items: the Course Syllabus Policy, the “with Distinction” Requirements and the Mature Student Entry Policy. The Committee aims to bring forward proposals on these three topics at the Senate meeting scheduled for April 11, 2025.

Vice-Principal Academic and Research Dr. Andrew Webster expressed appreciation for the ongoing work and engagement of the ASAP Committee, particularly regarding the Course Syllabus Policy, which remains under active review. Efforts are underway to bring forward a concrete proposal for Senate consideration. He also emphasized that improving the visibility and accessibility of academic support services for students is a key priority, forming part of a broader conversation on improving student support.

5.2 SENATE PROGRAM ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE (SPARC)

Vice-Principal Academic and Research Dr. Andrew Webster presented a report detailing the timeline and current status of the ongoing review, and the proposed external reviewers and visit dates for the upcoming review of the School of Education. He noted that the SPARC Committee endorsed the proposed reviewers with the final selection left to the School of Education.

MOTION

That Senate approve the proposed reviewers and visit dates as presented in Appendix 2 for the School of Education.

Moved by: Andrew Webster

Seconded by: Dawn Wiseman

Motion carried.

Dr. Andrew Webster presented the final program review report of the Department of Mathematics for formal adoption, noting that the Committee had reviewed the document and recommended it for approval.

MOTION

That Senate approve the final report as presented in Appendix 3 for the Department of Mathematics.

Moved by: Andrew Webster

Seconded by: Valerio Faraoni

Motion carried.

Associate Vice-Principal Research Dr. Kerry Hull presented a two-fold Graduate Studies Committee report.

Graduate Studies Regulations

Revisions and minor modifications to the Graduate Studies Regulations were presented. Dr. Kerry Hull highlighted that the primary change referred to the monitoring of student progress—particularly within the Individualized Master’s program—to establish clearer procedures for the early identification of serious concerns by either the student or the supervisor, enabling timely intervention and planning. The review also expands the structure and content expectations of the annual progress report and clarifies the consequences of an unsatisfactory report. It was noted that these regulations may be superseded by the established procedures within formal graduate programs such as those in Physics, Education and Computer Science.

A question was brought forward on the possibility to combine the Individualized Master’s Regulation and the procedures in place for specific graduate programs. Dr. Kerry Hull clarified that the revised regulations are not intended to supersede existing, effective processes. However, the Computer Science and Physics Department have indicated they will mirror the new approach, seeing value in its structure.

A subsequent question addressed the passing grade. Dr. Kerry Hull confirmed that the academic regulation establishing 65% as a passing grade in specific contexts is retained in a footnote and does not supersede the currently applicable regulations. She further emphasized that, in the event of any discrepancy, the prevailing regulations—such as those outlined in the Handbook of the School of Education—take precedence over the general academic regulations.

In response to a question about communication, it was noted that a centralized information package for Individualized Master’s student and their supervisors is being developed. This will consolidate all relevant processes and regulations into a single accessible site, ensuring all parties are fully informed. To address potential confusion among students, steps will be taken to ensure clear communication.

A recommendation was made to explicitly reference the School of Education programs in the regulations to enhance clarity. In response, a proposed and seconded amendment to Articles 20 and 29 of the Graduate Studies Regulations to explicitly include stand-alone graduate programs in Education, Physics, and Computer Science, thereby ensuring greater precision in the application of the regulations.

A question was raised regarding the appropriateness of assigning the Graduate Studies Coordinator—a non-faculty role—the responsibility of convening meetings in cases of unsatisfactory progress, given the academic nature of the process and the absence of mention of the Dean in the document. Dr. Kerry Hull clarified that the Graduate Studies Coordinator role serves an administrative function – coordinating meeting logistics and maintaining records – while academic leadership remains with the supervisor and departmental Chair. She stressed that due to the collaborative nature, the Deans are involved in the process. To reflect this, an amendment was proposed and seconded to update section 24 d., specifying that the report also be sent to the respective Dean.

Dr. Kerry Hull suggested to include details such as report preparation, responsibility and content in the templates and forms, rather than in the formal policy text.

Dr. Andrew Webster noted that the clarity of procedural responsibilities ensures accountability in the monitoring process. He emphasized that the coordinator’s role could be further developed in a future iteration of the policy.

MOTION

That Senate approve the amended Academic Regulations for Graduate Studies.

Moved by: Kerry Hull

Seconded by: Alpha Diallo

Abstention: 3

The motion was approved with amendments to section 20 and 29 and section 24 d. The associated forms will be brought to Senate for information at a later date.

Individualized Doctorate Degrees at Bishop's University

Dr. Kerry Hull elaborated on the origins of the Individualized Doctorate Degree and discussion with the *Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur* highlighting the substantial benefits this could offer to the students, the faculty and the University. She emphasized that the document is intended to initiate discussion on the implementation of Individualized Doctorate Degrees.

Individualized Doctorate (from document 670/5.3i)

An Individualized Doctorate (doctorat sur mesure) allows students to tailor a thesis-based PhD program to specific research goals that cannot be met by other programs offered by the University, but for which the University can provide the necessary resources. It involves a coherent, original, and rigorous educational plan that fosters the development of a high level of intellectual autonomy and expertise.

An Individualized Doctorate program can thus be used to allow researchers with robust research programs and supervisory experience, located at universities without an established doctoral program in a specific discipline, to supervise doctoral students, or for doctoral students to pursue an interdisciplinary research project that does not align with a single existing doctoral program.

Benefits of offering Individualized Doctorates

- Strengthens the research program and increases opportunities for external funding;
- Enriches both research activities and the overall teaching environment;
- Increases research occasions for students;
- Close interaction and collaborative opportunities.

Key challenges of Individualized Doctorate

- Program quality control;
- Student isolation;
- Potential impact on institutional identity;
- Resources allocation.

She concluded by highlighting some key elements provided in the document to help guide the discussion.

A question was raised about the admissions process. Dr. Kerry Hull clarified that a research-based master's and a minimum GPA of 3.0 (4.3 scale) would be required; direct entry from a bachelor's would not be permitted.

Dr. Andrew Webster stressed the need for rigorous standards and oversight to ensure academic quality and protect the University's reputation. He noted that the proposal offers an opportunity to formalize at Bishop's activity that is in place, as faculty members are currently supervising PhD students through external institutions, aligning policy with current practice and strengthening the University's role.

A question was asked about the research infrastructure of the University to support the Individual Doctorate programs and the access to adequate funding for research initiatives. Dr. Kerry Hull emphasized that the doctoral supervision would likely be concentrated in disciplines already offering graduate programs, supervisors would bear responsibility for demonstrating the necessary infrastructure to support doctoral student is in place.

It was further conveyed that the lack of necessary resources to deliver high-quality doctoral experiences would negatively impact the University reputation and compromise research opportunities for undergraduates – an element seen as central to the student experience at Bishop's. Dr. Kerry Hull clarified that a doctoral program could contribute positively to institutional resources and enhance undergraduate research experience by supporting faculty in supervision, thereby expanding opportunities for undergraduates.

The absence of provisions for PhD students to gain teaching experience —an essential component for those pursuing academic careers— the need for flexibility to accommodate part-time students, and the importance in supporting community-based research models, including collaboration with Indigenous partners were highlighted. Dr. Kerry Hull noted that efforts had been made to enable knowledge keepers to play a meaningful role in supervising doctoral students during the language development stage.

Improved alumni tracking, reinvestment of program-generated revenue, approval process, and costs associate to the implementation of these kind of programs were identified as key elements to consider.

Dr. Kerry Hull emphasized that approval from the Senate Planning Committee and Senate would be needed to implement the Individualized Doctorates Degrees program.

5.4 SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Dr. Kerry Hull presented the proposal for the establishment of Research Centres – part of the strategic research plan. The Policy outlines the purpose, structure, benefits, and evaluation of Research Centres aiming to enhance research at the institution.

Bishop's University Policy Proposal - Research Centres (from document 670/5.4)

Research Centres play a pivotal role in connecting faculty, independent researchers, visiting scholars, students, postdocs, and the broader community to advance common goals. They serve as hubs for research collaborations, opportunities for knowledge mobilization, and scholarly exchange, attracting Postdoctoral and Visiting Fellows, graduate students, and external partnerships. By showcasing faculty expertise and institutional strengths, Research Centres enhance the university's research profile and advance interdisciplinary innovation.

A question was raised regarding the similarities between the proposed Research Centres and the former research cluster model. Dr. Kerry Hull clarified that the new approach offers a clearer definition, broader external recognition, and structured processes including formal designation, annual evaluations, and increased support.

A point of concern emerged regarding eligibility, multi-centre affiliation, fairness in funding, and potential overlap with the Individualized PhD program discussed under Item 5.3. Dr. Kerry Hull clarified that affiliation with multiple centres would be permitted, provided there is a significant contribution to each. She also emphasized that the funding approval criteria are designed to be objective, balanced, and, to the extent possible, free of bias. The possibility of approving unfunded centres remains open for further consideration and discussion.

Dr. Kerry Hull invited members to share the document with colleagues and to bring to her attention any proposal for changes.

The item will be brought to Senate for approval at a later date.

669/6 OTHERS BUSINESS

6.1 ACADEMIC REPORT

Dr. Andrew Webster, Vice-Principal Academic and Research, presented an overview of the Curriculum and Academic Structures document, highlighting its purpose in reinforcing Senate's ownership and responsibility in academic decision-making. The document comprises two main components: financial considerations and curriculum development. It calls for a strategic prioritization of programs and resources, advocating for a multi-year approach to academic planning as a response to ongoing financial challenges—rather than applying uniform budget cuts to each area.

Dr. Webster emphasized the need for decisions centered on program offerings, staffing, sustainable resource allocation, and long-term planning. He underscored the critical role of Senate leadership in ensuring a transparent and coordinated process, and stressed the importance of institutional structural and financial self-reflection.

He indicated that more detailed frameworks will be brought to Senate at the April and May meetings. This timeline would allow sufficient lead time between adoption and the observation of any resulting changes, though academic program changes in practice may not necessarily commence until September 2026.

In response to a request for clarification on the timeline, Dr. Webster explained that the aim is for Senate to approve as many proposals as possible by its May meeting, enabling implementation and review activities to begin in the Fall.

A follow-up question was raised regarding the Board of Governor's decision to postpone its review of Limited-Term Appointments and Tenure-Stream Positions to its June meeting. The Principal noted that the budgeting process is ongoing, with greater financial clarity expected following the May Board of Governors meeting.

A request was also made to explore the possibility of approving the financial component before the end of the student representatives' mandates. Dr. Webster noted that this point had already been discussed with the Students' Representative Council (SRC) Vice-President Academic Affairs with no possibility to make exception to the established rules. However, Dr. Webster encouraged SRC incoming SRC members to attend the April Senate meeting and to contact him beforehand to ensure they are well-informed for the May vote.

Suggestions to proceed with work on Proposals to support Board discussions in June and help inform decision would be possible. Dr. Webster mentioned that although initial review of program sustainability would be preferable, full implementation depends on departmental inputs and timely coordination of feedback across academic units. He emphasized the importance of aligning this process with the institutional priorities and upcoming Board of Governors decisions.

6.2 RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES REPORT

Dr. Kerry Hull presented the Research and Graduate Studies report which focused on Research week – March 17-21, 2025. She encouraged everyone to attend and promote the events mentioning also that that efforts were to engage young children to attend the event (Panda Daycare). Special attention was drawn to Tuesday's student-led events and Thursday talk by Faculty members.

6.3 MOODLE ACCESS ISSUES

Dr. Patrick McBrine reported that during the week of February 20, 2025, students were unexpectedly locked out from the Moodle platform during assessments and examinations, resulting in confusion and disruption. Faculty members expressed concerns about the impact of teaching and learning, as well as lack of communication and transparency surrounding the process. He conveyed that strong and unanimous concerns were expressed by the Faculty Council regarding administrative interference in academic matters, noting that Moodle is regarded by faculty as a core teaching tool and should not be used to solve administrative or financial issues.

Registrar Hans Rouleau provided an overview of the process implemented to address rising student late fees resulting in bad-debt. He explained that Bishop's adopted a more flexible approach than other universities, opting to suspend Moodle access for students with unpaid balances rather than proceeding with full deregistration. He emphasized that multiple reminders and communications are issued prior to any suspension and that payment plans are available — a point echoed by Dr. Webster.

Dr. Webster added that while faculty should be informed in advance to manage classroom impacts, Moodle also functions as an administrative tool linked to student status. He clarified that this approach does not constitute interference in teaching or faculty control of the platform.

Dr. McBrine added that while confidentiality must be respected, the absence of context leaves Faculty unintentionally involved in a process, highlighting the need for better communication.

It was argued that such actions disproportionately affect most vulnerable students and raised questions about the effectiveness of current collection practices.

A call was made for a more compassionate and systemic approach to better support students facing financial hardship.

The discussion concluded with a recognition that the institution must continue to balance financial sustainability with equitable access to education.

6.4 FACULTY COUNCIL — ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN REPRESENTATION ON SENATE

Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier invited Mr. Gary McCormick to present the Faculty Council proposal to include an Academic Librarian as a full voting member of Senate.

Mr. McCormick explained the request and its rationale, emphasizing that academic librarians, as tenured academics with academic freedom and instructional responsibilities—including teaching courses—should be eligible to serve as full voting members of the Senate and its committees. He noted that most Canadian universities, including Maple League institutions, already include librarians on their Senates.

Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier emphasized that the Board of Governors is the sole entity with the authority to determine Senate's composition, as governed by the Statutes under the Board's purview. He specified that under the current Statutes, five Senate members are appointed by the Faculty Council—three (3) from divisions and two (2) representing contract faculty—suggesting this may be an avenue for addressing the issue.

Dr. Andrew Webster inquired about specific Senate Committees on which librarians could serve. Mr. McCormick noted that while a comprehensive review has not been done, the librarians would be eligible to sit on four (4) Committees, as follow:

- Senate Library Committee;
- Senate Research Committee;
- Senate Teaching and Learning Centre Initiative Committee;
- Senate Nominating Committee.

It was further clarified that eligibility depends on whether the committee's mandate explicitly includes librarians or allows for members elected by Faculty Council.

Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier communicated that three options could be envisioned:

- Status Quo – Maintaining the current structure;
- Reform of existing seats – Modification of the language governing the five Senate seats appointed by Faculty Council to allow representation of librarians.
- Addition of a Senator – Recommendation to the Board of Governors for an additional seat on Senate for a librarian;

Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier emphasized that any formal change to Senate composition would fall under the Board's authority.

The item will be brought to the April Senate for discussion with motion incorporating the three options for adoption with Gary McCormick representing the Academic Librarians and participating in the debate.

666/7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.5 School of Education

Dean Julie Desjardins explained that the item was brought back to Senate as a follow-up to the program and course changes presented at the March Senate meeting. A discrepancy had been identified during the previous vote, specifically regarding the removal of a chemistry course from the B.Ed. in Teaching and Learning at the Secondary Level – Science and Technology profile, which is no longer offered by the department. To address the resulting credit imbalance, the School of Education proposes adjusting the elective block from three (3) to four (4) credits. This correction, outlined in the document (document 670/7.5 - page 2), is intended solely to ensure proper credit alignment.

MOTION

On behalf of the School of Education, that Senate approve curriculum changes included in documents 670/7.5.

Moved by: Kerry Hull

Seconded by: Dawn Wiseman

Motion carried.

The meeting ended at 5:27 p.m.



Sébastien Lebel-Grenier, Chair
Vice-Chancellor and Principal


Geneviève Gagné, Secretary General