

**Memorandum**

To: Faculty of Graduate Studies Academic Planning & Policy Committee

From: Chloë Brushwood Rose, Chair, Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy Committee

Date: 8 June 2020

Subject: Proposed Revisions to Pan-University Academic Nomenclature re Graduate Specializations

On behalf of the Senate Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy Committee (ASCP), I am writing to invite the Academic Planning & Policy Committee to consider and provide feedback to ASCP on a revision to the term “Specialization” as it is defined in the Pan-University Academic Nomenclature. The proposed revision is outlined in red bolded font in the table below.

<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed Revision</b>
<p><b>Specialization (Graduate):</b> A structured plan of study within a graduate program that provides advanced or in-depth study in a particular focus within the discipline. They are not recorded on either the academic transcript or the degree parchment. Normally a specialization will require a minimum of 12 credits in addition to the core in order to advance the designed depth within the degree program requirements.</p>	<p><b>Specialization (Graduate):</b> A structured plan of study within a graduate program that provides advanced or in-depth study in a particular focus within the discipline. Normally a specialization will require a minimum of 12 credits in addition to the core in order to advance the designed depth within the degree program requirements. <b>A specialization may be recorded on the academic transcript, but is not recorded on the degree parchment. In cases where a specialization is to appear on the transcript, its establishment, deletion or modification are considered major modifications within the context of the York University Quality Assurance Procedures.</b></p>

**Background and Rationale**

In June 2019, ASCP considered a memo from Dean Thomas Loebel, on behalf of the Graduate Program in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, seeking guidance

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about the possibility of allowing Fields and/or Specializations to be noted on graduate degree transcripts. Over the 2019-2020 year, ASCP and its Coordinating & Planning Sub-Committee have held several discussions on this question, keeping the following considerations in mind:

- recognition that the existence of a similar sub-structure at the undergraduate level that appears on the transcript – streams – presents a compelling rationale to allow for a similar practice at the graduate level;
- the realization that a consistent approach to specialization notations likely would not be possible across the university as some programs prefer to use specializations as more of a recruitment tool than a structured plan of study; and
- an environmental scan of practices at other universities which found that a variety of approaches exist across Ontario.

In view of the above factors, ASCP approved in principle a revised definition that allows for specializations to either appear or not appear on the transcript depending on the wishes of a graduate program. ASCP confirmed that programs seeking to add a specialization notation to the transcript would be required to complete and submit a major modification proposal through the usual governance channels, as outlined in the York University Quality Assurance Procedures (YUQAP), even for specializations currently in existence.

At this time, ASCP wishes to consult with APPC on the proposed revision before pursuing a recommendation to Senate to update the Pan-University Nomenclature.

The complete Pan-University Academic Nomenclature document is appended for reference.

cc: Kathryn White, Secretary to ASCP

## Academic Nomenclature

**Academic Decision:** An undergraduate student's progression status in their program as determined by their final grades at the end of each academic session (e.g. Eligible to Proceed). Academic decisions appear on students' grade report.

**Advanced Standing:** Credit granted towards a York University graduate degree or diploma for graduate-level courses completed at York or another post-secondary institution that have not been used to fulfill the requirements of another degree program or graduate diploma.

**Calendar:** The Calendar is the University's official reference document for all academic programs, policies and requirements.

**Collaborative Specialization:** A graduate program that provides an additional multidisciplinary experience for students enrolled in and completing the degree requirements for one of a number of approved programs. Students meet the admission requirements of and register in the participating (or "home") program but complete, in addition to the degree requirements of that program, the additional requirements specified by the collaborative program. The degree conferred is that of the home program, and the completion of the collaborative program is indicated by a transcript notation indicating the additional specialization that has been attained. It is an Intra-University type of degree program.

**Combined Degree Program:** A program of study involving two existing degree programs of different types in which successful completion of the requirements is confirmed by a separate and different degree document being awarded by each program. The combination may comprise two graduate programs, two undergraduate programs or a graduate and an undergraduate program. The combination typically involves at least one "professionally" oriented program. The programs may be structured such that students pursue the two programs concurrently or consecutively. It is an Intra-University type of degree program.

**Core Courses:** Mandatory specified courses within an undergraduate program that provide a solid theoretical foundation and / or convey a common body of disciplinary knowledge and skills.

**Co-requisite:** A course that must be taken simultaneously with another course.

**Cotutelle:** A customized program of doctoral study developed jointly by two institutions for an individual student in which the requirements of each university's doctoral programs are upheld, but the student working with supervisors at each institution prepares a single dissertation which is then examined by a committee whose members are drawn from both institutions. The student is awarded two degree documents though there is a notation on the transcripts indicating that the student completed his or her dissertation under Cotutelle arrangements. It is an Inter-Institutional type of degree program.

**Course Credit Exclusion:** A formal status accorded to sets of undergraduate or graduate courses that are recognized as having sufficient overlap in content. Although the courses may have a significant degree of overlap, they are not considered fully equivalent / interchangeable. Students do not receive credit for both / all courses in a designated set of CCE's. See *Senate Guidelines and Procedures Governing Course Cross-listings, Exclusions and Substitutions*.

**Course Substitution:** A descriptive term applied when a course is recognized as sufficiently similar to a required course in a degree program, certificate or diploma. Substitutions may be programmatic and offered to all students or individualized for a student with departmental or program approval. See *Senate Guidelines and Procedures Governing Course Cross-listings, Exclusions and Substitutions*.

**Cross-listed courses:** Courses jointly recognized by two or more teaching units, with one unit designated as the course originator. All instances of cross-listed courses are the same course with different identifiers most commonly utilized to signify relevance to more than one particular discipline. See *Senate Guidelines and Procedures Governing Course Cross-listings, Exclusions and Substitutions*.

**Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA):** The weighted average based on grades obtained in courses taken over all academic sessions.

**Degree:** An academic credential awarded upon successful completion of a prescribed set of requirements that meet a standard of performance as defined by the University.

**Degree Level Expectations:** Frameworks describing what students should know, and be able to do, after successful completion of a degree program at the bachelors, masters and doctoral degree levels.

**Degree Option:** A category of undergraduate degree program that has a defined number of degree credit requirements and, where applicable, a minimum number of major credits. They include:

**Honours:** An undergraduate degree option; it requires the completion of a minimum of 120 credits and a minimum of 42 major credits.

**Specialized Honours:** An undergraduate degree option; it requires the completion of a minimum of 120 credits and a minimum of 54 major credits.

**Bachelor:** An undergraduate degree option; it requires the completion of a minimum of 90 credits and a minimum of 30 major credits.

**Degree Program:** A prescribed set of courses, combination of courses and / or other forms of study, research or experiential learning that collectively support the achievement of defined degree level expectations and program learning outcomes for an undergraduate or graduate program.

**Diploma:** A for-credit program of study at the graduate level, which is not itself a Masters or Doctoral degree program, in a specific area, topic or skill, that may be of a

disciplinary or interdisciplinary character. A diploma may be awarded when a candidate admitted to a masters program leaves the program after completing a certain proportion of the requirements (Type 1); offered in conjunction with a masters or doctoral degree, the admission to which requires that the candidate be already admitted to the Masters (or Doctoral) program (Type 2); or be offered as a stand-alone, direct-entry program, generally developed by a unit already offering a related Masters or Doctoral degree, and designed to meet the needs of a particular clientele or market (Type 3).

**Double Major:** An Honours degree option that includes concentrated sets of courses in two major subject areas for which students receive one Honours undergraduate degree with both majors identified on their transcript.

**Dual Credential Program:** A program of study offered by two or more universities or by a university and a college or institute, including Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning, in which successful completion of the requirements is confirmed by a separate and different degree/diploma document being awarded by at least two of the participating institutions, of which one is York University. It is an Inter-Institutional type of degree program.

**Electives:** Course(s) outside the prescribed set of program requirements, chosen by students and which count towards the total number of credits required for the degree.

**Field (Graduate):** In graduate programs, an area of concentration that is related to the demonstrable and collective strengths of the program's faculty members. There are no requirements associated with a field, and they are not recorded on either the academic transcript or the degree parchment.

**Grade Point Average (GPA):** The weighted average based on grades obtained in courses taken. The GPA is assessed at the end of an academic session and cumulatively to degree completion.

**Joint Degree program:** A program of study offered by two or more universities or by a university and a college or institute, including an Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, in which successful completion of the requirements is confirmed by a single degree document. It is an Inter-Institutional type of degree program.

**Learning Outcomes:** Define what a student should know, and be able to do, after successful completion of an assignment, activity, class, course or program.

**Letter of Permission (LOP):** A Letter of Permission or LOP is issued to a student who has been approved to take a course at another accredited university towards their York degree.

**Major:** A primary concentration of courses taken in a subject area within an undergraduate degree program. Normally, a major requires at least 30 of the 90 credits required for a bachelors degree or 42 of the 120 credits required for an Honours degree.

**Major Credits:** A structured set of courses specifically designated for inclusion in the undergraduate program requirements, either mandatory or among a list of options for students to choose. May include or be in addition to core courses.

**Minor:** A secondary concentration of courses taken in one subject area within an Honours degree. Normally, a minor requires at least 30 of the 120 credits required. Minors are not available in a bachelors degree.

**Prerequisite:** A requirement to successfully complete another course, set of courses or achieve a specific grade in a course (or overall GPA) before enrolment in an undergraduate or graduate course.

**Professional Masters:** A graduate program comprised of advanced studies in professional or applied fields. They may have strong theoretical underpinnings, but their primary purpose is the development of knowledge for application / accreditation in professional practice. Experiential learning is a common component of the degree. Normally they do not include a requirement to conduct original research.

**Reactivation:** The process by which an undergraduate student returns to their studies after an absence from an academic session. Students in good standing resuming their studies and students returning after a Required Withdrawal apply to reactivate their status in a degree program before enrolling in a future session.

**Reinstatement:** The process by which a graduate student in good academic standing, and within 12 months of their withdrawal, returns to their studies or to defend a thesis / dissertation.

**Session:** A prescribed period of time designated for the delivery of courses. York's sessions are Fall/ Winter and Summer. See also Sessional Dates.

**Sessional Dates:** Each academic session is scheduled to provide 12 weeks of teaching and a separate examination schedule. All sessions have beginning, end and suspension dates as governed by the *Senate Policy on Sessional Dates and the Scheduling of Examinations*.

**Specialization (Graduate):** A structured plan of study within a graduate program that provides advanced or in-depth study in a particular focus within the discipline. They are not recorded on either the academic transcript or the degree parchment. Normally a specialization will require a minimum of 12 credits in addition to the core in order to advance the designed depth within the degree program requirements.

**Stream (Undergraduate):** A structured set of courses with a particular focus within an Honours undergraduate degree program, to provide additional depth within the Major. Appears on the academic transcript but does not appear on the degree parchment. Normally a stream will require a minimum of 12 credits in addition to the core credits in order to advance the depth of the major within the degree program requirements.

**Transfer Credit:** Credit granted towards a York University undergraduate degree / certificate for advanced secondary and / or postsecondary studies (or the equivalent) from an accredited institution. It is given either upon admission / re-admission to York University or for pre-approved studies.

**Undergraduate Certificate:** A for credit program of studies attesting to a level of competence or skills in a particular area or field. It is distinct from an undergraduate degree program and stream. A certificate recognizes a specific grouping of courses that i) are cross-disciplinary but with a thematic coherence, ii) form a coherent yet distinctive complement to the major of a degree program, or iii) lead to the acquisition of specific skills or professional expertise that may meet requirements of outside accrediting bodies.

**Concurrent Certificate:** Completed concurrently with an undergraduate degree program.

**Consecutive Certificate:** Open to candidates who hold a degree or have significant post-secondary education.

**Visiting Students:** Individuals who enrol in undergraduate or graduate for-credit courses but do not intend to complete a degree, certificate or diploma at York.

The undergraduate Visiting Students categories are:

- those who hold an undergraduate degree (bachelors degree minimum) from an accredited university/university-level institution;
- those who do not hold an undergraduate degree but enrol in courses to fulfill the academic, upgrading or professional development requirements of a professional designation; or
- those who are currently attending another accredited university and take York courses on a *Letter of Permission* issued by their home institution.

Under the Ontario Visiting Graduate Student Plan, a graduate student registered at a university in Ontario may take graduate courses at another Ontario University without further admission requirements. York University graduate students may complete up to 6 credits in coursework under the OVGS Plan towards any one degree program.

**Year of Study:** An undergraduate student's progress towards a degree is measured in terms of credits passed rather than years of study completed. A common scale for 90- and 120-credit degrees correlates the number of credits earned and the year of study equivalent; a degree-specific scale exists for the Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) degree. The scales are published in the Undergraduate Calendar.

*Approved: 24 May 2018*