

Policy on Creating, Merging or Closing Academic Departments

Category:	Academic
Senate Approval:	Initial approval Jan 13, 2015; May 17, 2022
Date for Next Review:	September 2026
Responsibility:	Provost and Vice President Academic
Contact Officer:	Manager, Office of Provost and Vice President Academic

Policy Statement and Scope

This Policy will provide a process for the University to create a new academic department, merge existing academic departments or close an existing academic department.

There are a number of possible reasons for creating, merging or closing academic departments. These may include: changes to academic programs being offered, creation of new schools, meeting the University's strategic goals, or the current administrative structure of an academic department is deemed to be non-optimal by members of the academic department(s) and/or their Dean(s).

As set out in the Trent Act, authority to determine the courses of study at the University rests with Senate. This policy will apply to new and existing academic departments that that have been approved by Senate and the Board. Recommendations under this Policy will be made to Senate by the Chair of the Academic Planning & Budget Committee.

Subsequent to Senate approval, a recommendation to create, merge or close an academic department that has budgetary implications will be made to the Board of Governors by the President or the Provost. In the absence of budgetary implications, the President or the Provost will notify the Board of Governors of Senate's decision to create, merge or close an academic department.

Definition of Academic Department

An academic department is a duly constituted academic administrative unit approved by Senate and the Board. An academic department is normally responsible for the delivery of undergraduate and/or graduate degree program(s). TUFA and CUPE members are appointed to academic departments in their letters of appointment to the University. Academic departments are chaired by members of TUFA consistent with TUFA CA VI.10 and VI.11.

Proposal

The Dean, in consultation with the relevant academic units and faculty, will prepare the proposed recommendation as per the procedures set out in this Policy. The Proposal will include the following documentation:

1. Name of Department to be created or closed or Name of Departments to be merged

If the proposed merger results in a new academic department with a different name, the name of the new academic department.

2. **Effective Date** – date that the creation, closure or merger will take effect
3. **Rationale** – provide a detailed rationale indicating how the creation, merger or closure of the academic department(s) assists the University in meeting one or more of its approved strategic goals.
4. **Degree Programs** – list all undergraduate and graduate degree programs under the responsibility of the academic department(s) at the time of proposal submission, and those that the academic department(s) will be responsible for following approval of the proposal.

For mergers and closures, include a plan for determining how and where degree programs will be housed. If a degree program is to be terminated, the Policy on Terminating an Academic Program shall be followed.

5. **TUFA Members** – list all TUFA members affiliated with the academic department(s) at the time of proposal submission, and those that will be affiliated with the academic department(s) following approval of the proposal.

Include a plan for appointing or cross-appointing affected TUFA members to another academic department, whether it be an entirely new academic department, an existing academic department or interdisciplinary school, or a new academic department that is the result of the merger of two or more departments. This plan must be consistent with the provisions of the TUFA Collective Agreement. Any requests for appointment or cross-appointment will be made according to the procedures of TUFA CA III.9 Voluntary Transfers and Cross-Appointments Between Academic Units and Campuses.

6. **Research Centres** – list all research centres affiliated with the academic department(s) at the time of proposal submission, and those that will be affiliated with the academic department(s) following approval of the proposal.

For mergers and closures, include a plan for determining the affiliation of research centres.

7. **Budget** – highlight any anticipated savings and/or costs/resources associated with the creation, merger or closure, including but not limited to teaching staff, support staff, space and infrastructure.

Institutional Process

A proposal to create, merge or close an academic program may be initiated by a Chair, Director, Dean, or the Provost. Regardless of where the proposal is initiated, the process below will be followed by the Dean(s).

1. **Provost's Planning Group** – bring the plan to PPG for discussion
2. **Notification to Chair(s) of the Department(s) being Merged or Closed** – the Dean will notify the relevant Chair(s) and inform them that consultation with the broader academic community will be taking place
3. **Formal Consultation** – Dean will present plan and invite feedback from:
 - Chair and Members of academic department(s) to be closed or merged
 - TUFA members who will or may be affected by the proposal (e.g., faculty that may wish to join a new academic department, cross-appointed faculty)
 - Relevant Decanal Council(s) and Graduate Program Directors' Committee, as appropriate
4. **TUFA Joint Committee** – Dean consults with Joint Committee for consistency of plan with the

5. **Revision of Proposal** – based on feedback, the Dean(s) may ask the proponents of the proposed new academic department to provide additional information and/or to modify their plan
6. **Academic Planning & Budget Committee** – the Dean will bring the proposal to the Academic Planning & Budget Committee for consideration and recommendation to Senate for approval.

The submission will include:

- Decanal Recommendation
- Summary of process and consultation conducted with relevant dates
- Proposal

7. **Senate and Faculty Board** – The recommendation from the Academic Planning & Budget Committee will be forwarded to Faculty Board for Information and to Senate for Approval

Note: Senate Notion of Motion – according to Senate By-law V, motions to Senate to alter the status of any academic department require notice of one month, duly made at the previous Senate meeting.

8. **Board of Governors** – Once approved by Senate, the President or the Provost & Vice President Academic will take the proposal forward to the Board of Governors
 - For Information – If the proposal does not include additional finances or facilities, the Board of Governors will be notified of Senate’s decision
 - For Approval – If the proposal requires additional finances or facilities, the full proposal will be submitted to the Board of Governors for approval

Communications Plan

Subsequent to approval by Senate and the Board of Governors (if applicable), the relevant Dean(s) will be responsible for overseeing a communication plan that includes notifying:

- Those affected by the decision, including Chairs/Directors, faculty members
- Those responsible for Websites, Viewbook and Academic Calendars
- Office of Registrar and Recruitment & Admissions
- Students, as appropriate
- Office of External Relations and Advancement
- Trent University Alumni Association
- External partners and stakeholders, as appropriate

Faculty – Transfers and Revised Letters of Appointment

- The relevant Dean will provide affected members with updated letters of appointment or cross-appointment to reflect new/revised affiliation with an academic department.
- The Dean will confirm the applicable written criteria for tenure or permanency and promotion for each faculty member, in a manner consistent with Article VII.3.3.2 of the TUFA Collective Agreement.
- In cases where faculty are moving to a newly established academic Department where there is no ‘receiving unit’, decanal agreement will be sufficient to approve the transfer, in reference to III.9 Voluntary Transfers and Cross-Appointments Between Academic Units and Campuses.