

FOR APPROVAL**PUBLIC****OPEN SESSION**

TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

SPONSOR: Professor Susan McCahan, Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

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PRESENTER: Same as above

CONTACT INFO:

DATE: April 28, 2022 for May 5, 2022

AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Proposal for the closure of the Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins (HBA), Faculty of Arts and Science.

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs approves the closures of undergraduate programs within an existing degree, as defined by the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP). (*AP&P Terms of Reference, Section 4.4.b.i.*)

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. **Committee on Academic Policy and Programs [for approval] (May 5, 2022)**

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The proposal to close the Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins was approved at the Faculty of Arts and Science Faculty Council meeting on April 20, 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins is a Faculty of Arts and Science program that is offered by the Department for the Study of Religion. The Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins began over 25 years ago, and originally played an important role in the training of undergraduate students interested in graduate study in religions of Mediterranean antiquity.

Students in the program critically analyze ancient sources--textual, epigraphic, archaeological—sometimes in their original languages, in order to understand the beginnings of Christianity within a wider orbit of Jewish, Greco-Roman, and broader Near and Middle Eastern contexts.

The decision to close the program is based on three key factors: 1) a decline in enrolments beginning in 2012, which has led to the suspension of new enrolments as of the 2019-20 academic year; 2) the program name is at odds with the current scholarly approach in this area of study; and 3) in the Report from the most recent review of the Department for the Study of Religion, conducted in 2020-21, the review team recommended closing the Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins.

With the closure of the Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins, the Department for the Study of Religion will be able to reallocate resources to support existing programs of greater interest to students, as well as potential new offerings as part of a wider re-design of the Religion programs.

Students who wish to pursue an offering in this area may take any of the programs offered in the Department for the Study of Religion, for example: the Minor in Religion, the Majors in Religion or Buddhist Studies or Islamic Studies, or the Specialists in Religion or Buddhist Studies.

There are no students currently active in the Specialist. A small number of students who enrolled in the Specialist prior to the suspension to new enrolments have lapsed in their studies and are no longer actively studying in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Should these students return to their studies, they would be easily accommodated to complete any of the Specialist, Major or Minor programs offered by the Department for the Study of Religion

The proposed program closure has been discussed in the DSR Undergraduate Curriculum Committee with a range of faculty and students present, and the closure was noted in Departmental meetings as well as the self-study for the 2020-21 Cyclical Review of the Department and its programs. Feedback has been unanimously in favour of the closure.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no negative implications to the closure of the Specialist.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be it Resolved,

THAT the proposed closure of the Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins, Faculty of Arts and Science, dated March 31, 2022, to which admissions were administratively suspended on February 28, 2020, be approved with an anticipated program closure date of August 31, 2022.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

- Proposal for the closure of the Specialist in Religion: Christian Origins, Faculty of Arts & Science (March 31, 2022)

University of Toronto Proposal:

Closure of an Existing Program (Graduate or Undergraduate)

This template has been developed in line with the University of Toronto's Quality Assurance Process. The process followed for the closure of any program is the same as that required for the approval of any new such program.

Closure proposed; please specify precisely what is being closed: i.e., graduate diploma, field, certificate, option within a program (e.g., specialist, major or minor), entire program or degree (graduate or undergraduate).	Religion: Christian Origins Specialist (ASSPE1520)
Department/unit if applicable:	Department for the Study of Religion
Faculty/academic division:	Faculty of Arts & Science
Faculty/academic division contact:	Randy Boyagoda, Vice-Dean, Undergraduate Kevin Mak, Acting Associate Director, Governance and Curriculum Services
Department/unit contact:	Simon Coleman, Associate Chair, DSR
Effective date program will be closed to new admissions:	Admission to program has been administratively suspended since February 28, 2020.
Effective date of full closure of program: date by which students currently in the program will be expected to graduate.	August 31, 2022
Version date: please change as you edit this proposal.	March 31, 2022

1 Brief Summary

- Please clarify precisely what is being closed.
- What is the relationship between what is being closed and any remaining offerings:
 - ▶ If only part of a program is being closed, please clarify the relationship between this and those portions of the program that will remain open.

We are proposing to close the Religion: Christian Origins Specialist program, a Faculty of Arts & Science program, offered by the Department for the Study of Religion (DSR), for which admission has been suspended since 2020. Closing the Specialist was a recommendation of the 2020-21 UTQAP review of the Department for the Study of Religion programs that has been considered and adopted by the program.

With the proposed closure of the Religion: Christian Origins Specialist program, students interested in the study of Religion will, instead, be able to complete any of the programs offered in the Department, for example: the Minor in Religion, the Majors in Religion or Buddhist Studies or Islamic Studies, or the Specialists in Religion or Buddhist Studies.

Courses relating to Christian Origins will remain fully available to our DSR students enrolled in other Religion programs, and also to other students as appropriate.

2 Academic Rationale

Background:

- You may wish to speak to when the program was first created; how long has it been offered; past success of the program.
- What has led to the decision to close the program?
- Please provide a full academic rationale:
 - ▶ You may wish to refer to changing enrolment; changing disciplinary landscape; shifting expertise of the professoriate; poor quality of the academic offering; overlap with other existing programs.
 - ▶ Where appropriate, you may want to quote from recent unit or program reviews.
 - ▶ Explain alignment with the unit's academic plan.

The Religion: Christian Origins Specialist began more than 25 years ago, and originally played an important role in the training of many undergraduate students seeking to go on to graduate study in religions of Mediterranean antiquity.

Students enrolled in the Specialist would critically analyze ancient sources--textual, epigraphic, archaeological—sometimes in their original languages, in order to understand the beginnings of Christianity within a wider orbit of Jewish, Greco-Roman, and broader Near and Middle Eastern contexts. This enabled students to hone their critical thinking skills, as well as explore subject matters from a variety of methodological and historical perspectives.

The decision to close the program takes into consideration several factors:

- The program has seen a decline in enrolments, with fewer than 5 students enrolled each year beginning in 2012, which has led to the suspension of new enrolments into the program, effective as of the 2019-20 academic year.
- The program name is now at odds with the scholarly approach of faculty in this area, as instructors have sharp critiques of the search for 'origins' and serious questions about how and when to use the nomenclature of 'Christian' to describe groups and traditions in the first and second centuries. In the Report from the most recent review of DSR and its programs, conducted in 2020-21, the review team recommended closing the Religion: Christian Origins Specialist.

With the closure of the Religion: Christian Origins Specialist, DSR will be able to reallocate resources to support programs of greater interest to our students. These may include the creation of an Early Christianity/Christianity in the Ancient Mediterranean Stream or Focus (exact name to be considered) as part of a wider redesign of our Programs.

3 Impact on Other Programs/Units of the Proposed Closure

- Please provide evidence of consultation with any programs/units/faculties that will be affected.
- What are the positive and negative implications that need to be considered in the closure.
- Impact on the nature and quality of the division's program of study.
- Impact of closure on other units including inter-divisional and inter-institutional agreements/contracts.
- Please mention if the courses that supported this degree, program or program option will continue to be offered.

There has been consultation with the Departments of Classics, Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, and Art History, as well as St. Michael's College, all of which have signalled their support for the proposed closure.

There are no active students in the program. The DSR courses that have supported this program will continue to be taught, as appropriate, as part of our annual DSR course offerings, open e.g., to Minors, Majors and Specialists in Religion.

There is no impact on other academic units. There are no inter-divisional or inter-institutional agreements associated with this program.

4 Student Accommodation

- Please include the current enrolment showing breakdown, by year, in the program or option being closed.

Table 1: Undergraduate

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Current enrolment	0	0	0	0

- Provide details concerning how students in progress will be accommodated.
 - ▶ Will students be allowed to complete their program or be transferred to another program? In the latter instance, please comment on the ease with which they can complete the requirements of the new program and show evidence of consultation, if relevant.
 - ▶ Deadline by which accommodated students must complete the program—if there are grounds for concern, what are their options if they have not completed the program by that deadline?
 - ▶ Capacity/course availability to accommodate affected students.
 - ▶ Can inactive students reactivate to the closed program?
- Any inactive students?
- What will the impact of the proposed closure be on the range of academic options available to students in the future (i.e., are there other programs or options that will fill the void that may or may not be created by the closure)?
- Consultation with students.
 - ▶ Please provide details concerning consultation with students around the proposed change, including:
 - meetings, town halls, emails, questionnaires
 - any response or feedback received
 - ▶ How will students be notified of the change following approval?

Active Students:

There are no students who are currently active in the program.

Inactive Students:

There are 13 inactive students in the program, with the latest student registered in Winter 2020, and a majority registered last between 1996-2008. Should any of these inactive students wish to return, they can be accommodated into any of the programs offered in the Department, for example: the Minor in Religion, the Majors in Religion

or Buddhist Studies or Islamic Studies, or the Specialists in Religion or Buddhist Studies.

The proposed program closure has been discussed in the DSR Undergraduate Curriculum Committee with a range of faculty and students present, and the closure was noted in Departmental meetings as well as our 2021 Self-Study documentation. The feedback obtained was unanimously in favour of closure. The DSR also consulted with the full Executive Board of our UG society (RUSA), members of which are appointed to our UG committees. Members of the RUSA Executive expressed full support of this proposal.

Students will be notified of the closure of this program via the 2022-23 Arts & Science Academic Calendar pending governance approval.

5 Faculty/Staff Accommodation

- What is the impact, if any, on faculty and staff of the closure?

We have consulted with the faculty involved in the delivery of the Specialist program and they are firmly in favour of this proposed closure, which has effectively been in operation for two years. There is no impact on faculty as they will continue to develop Early Christianity/Christianity in the Ancient Mediterranean courses as part of our more general Religion Programs (Major and Minor) and in offering courses to interested students based in other units. Staff will not be impacted by the closure and will continue providing support to our other programs in the Department.

6 UTQAP Process

The governance pathway is summarized in the table below.

Steps	Approvals
Decanal sign-off	
Provostial sign-off	March 23, 2022
Faculty/divisional council (approval of closure of minors, where there is a continuing specialist or major)	April 20, 2022
Submission to Provost's office	
AP&P (approval of program closures: undergrad specialists/majors; minors where there is no specialist or major;	May 5, 2022

Proposal for the Closure of an Existing Program (Graduate or Undergraduate)

graduate fields or diploma; and collaborative programs)	
Academic Board (approval of degree, graduate program, diploma closures)	N/A
Executive Committee of Governing Council (executive confirms degree, grad program, closures)	N/A
Inclusion in annual report to Quality Council	
Inclusion in annual report to MCU (in case of closure of degree)	