

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

TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

SPONSOR: Nicolas Rule, Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

CONTACT INFO: (416) 978-3948, vp.academicprograms@utoronto.ca

PRESENTER: See Sponsor.

CONTACT INFO:

DATE: May 6, 2025 for May 13, 2025

AGENDA ITEM: 6

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Proposal to Close the Specialist in Environmental Geosciences, University of Toronto Mississauga

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. UTM Academic Affairs Committee [For Recommendation] (May 8, 2025)
2. **Committee on Academic Policy and Programs [For Approval] (May 13, 2025)**

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The proposal to close the Specialist in Environmental Geosciences was approved at the University of Mississauga Academic Affairs Committee meeting on May 8, 2025.

HIGHLIGHTS:

This is a proposal to close the undergraduate Specialist in Environmental Geosciences program, jointly offered by the Departments of Geography, Geomatics and Environment (GGE) and Chemical and Physical Sciences (CPS) at the University of Toronto Mississauga. Admissions to the Specialist were administrative suspended on October 24, 2024.

The Specialist, which was introduced in 2014, aimed to fulfill academic requirements for Professional Geoscientist (P.Geo.) certification, as outlined by the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario (APGO) and the Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG); however, the program has faced persistent challenges. It has experienced low student interest, with only two students ever completing the program—both graduating in 2019—and there have been no new enrolments over the past five years. Additional issues have included curricular changes that compromised alignment with APGO standards, inadequate high school preparation among incoming students, and inconsistent delivery of key required courses.

In response to these issues, CPS restructured its Earth Sciences curriculum in 2019–2020, enhancing their Specialist in Earth Science (ERSPE1465) to fulfill APGO certification requirements through two dedicated pathways. This evolution rendered the Specialist in Environmental Geosciences program functionally redundant. Closure of the program will not negatively impact students, faculty, or program offerings. There are currently no students enrolled, and those interested in P.Geo. certification have accessible, approved alternatives. Thus, this closure represents a positive and strategic realignment of resources toward more viable and in-demand academic offerings, with no disruption to existing teaching commitments or student opportunities.

Department Chairs from both GGE and CPS departments, in consultation with Departmental Academic Advisors from both units, participated in extensive discussions of program closure over several years. Students were informed about the program closure on March 20, 2025, and were given an open forum to provide feedback and ask questions. Students in related programs were consulted and informed about the transition and existing alternatives. The proposal was shared with cognate units at the Faculty of Arts and Science, and no concerns were raised.

Note: a UTM Co-op Internship Program (UTMCIP) stream for the Specialist in Environmental Geosciences, which was created in 2023-24 through a major modification, will also be closed this year, through a separate governance proposal.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

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

RECOMMENDATION:

Be It Resolved,

THAT the proposed closure of the Specialist in Environmental Geosciences, University of Toronto Mississauga, as described in the proposal dated March 31, 2025, to which admissions were administratively suspended on October 25, 2024, be approved with an anticipated program closure date of August 31, 2025.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

- Proposal to close the Specialist in Environmental Geosciences, University of Toronto Mississauga

University of Toronto Proposal:

Closure of an Existing Program or Program Structure (Graduate or Undergraduate)

Closure proposed; please specify precisely what is being closed: i.e., field, certificate, option within a program (e.g., specialist, part-time option), entire program or degree.	Specialist in Environmental Geosciences undergraduate program: ERSPE1253
Department/unit if applicable:	Department of Geography, Geomatics and Environment; and Department of Chemical and Physical Sciences
Faculty/academic division:	University of Toronto Mississauga
Department/unit contact:	Laura Brown Associate Professor and Department Chair lc.brown@utoronto.ca
Faculty/academic division contact:	Bryan Stewart Vice-Dean, Academic Programs vdacademicprog.utm@utoronto.ca Ferzeen Sammy Manager, Academic Programs, Reviews, and Quality Assurance ferzeen.sammy@utoronto.ca
Date when admissions were administratively suspended:	October 25, 2024
Effective date of full closure of program: i.e., date by which students currently in the program are expected to graduate.	August 31, 2025
Version date: please change as you edit this proposal.	March 31, 2025

Framework for UTQAP closures:

UTQAP processes support a structured approach for creating, reflecting on, assessing, and developing plans to change and improve academic programs and units in the context of institutional and divisional commitments and priorities.

The University of Toronto (U of T), in its [*Statement of Institutional Purpose*](#) (1992), articulates its mission as a commitment “to being an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of excellent quality.” Thus “quality assurance through assessment of new program proposals and review of academic programs and units in which they reside is a priority for the University...:

The quality of the scholarship of the faculty, and the degree to which that scholarship is brought to bear in teaching are the foundations of academic excellence. More generally, all of the factors that contribute to collegial and scholarly life —academic and administrative complement, research and scholarly activity, infrastructure, governance, etc.—bear on the quality of academic programs and the broad educational experience of students. ([*Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units*](#) (2010))

The University’s approach to quality assurance is built on two primary indicators of academic excellence: the quality of the scholarship and research of faculty; and the success with which that scholarship and research is brought to bear on the achievement of Degree Level Expectations.

These indicators are assessed by determining how our scholarship, research and programs compare to those of our international peer institutions and how well our programs meet their Degree Level Expectations.

Program and Program Structure Closure

Proposals for program closures are vehicles of academic change. The University of Toronto views the closing of academic activities as a normal and positive part of quality assurance and program evolution. There are a number of possible reasons for closing a program including low enrolment, a changing disciplinary landscape and poor quality of the academic program. These reasons may be articulated in external review reports or may be identified by members of the University community.

This template (last updated by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs on May 28, 2024) aligns with UTQAP requirements and will help to ensure that all evaluation criteria established by the Quality Council are addressed in bringing forward a proposal. Divisions may have additional requirements that should be integrated into the proposal.

Steps	Dates
Decanal sign-off	March 30, 2025
VPAP sign-off	March 7, 2025
Faculty/divisional council (closure of program structures; freestanding minors; fields; concentrations; category 1 certificates; etc.)	UTM AAC: May 8, 2025 (Cycle 6A)
AP&P (closure of undergraduate specialists; majors; diplomas)	May 13, 2025
Academic Board (closure of degree; graduate program; joint program)	N/A
Executive Committee of Governing Council (confirmation of approval of degree, grad program, joint program closures)	N/A
Inclusion in annual report to Quality Council	July 2025

1 Executive Summary

Please provide a brief summary of the closure being proposed.

Launched in 2014 as a jointly offered program between the Departments of Chemical and Physical Sciences (CPS) and Geography, Geomatics and Environment (GGE) the Environmental Geosciences specialist program (ERSPE1253) was intended to fulfill the knowledge requirements for certification as a Professional Geoscientist (P. Geo.) in conformity with the stipulations of the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario (APGO) and the Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG). However, the program has consistently experienced low student interest, with only two enrolled students since its launch (see Table 1). The enrolled students graduated from the program in 2019, and there have been no further enrolments since then (i.e. in the past 5 years). The program currently has no students enrolled. Closing the program will have no impact on the CPS or GGE departments, and will not negatively impact study options for students because there are alternate programs at UTM that lead towards P.Geo. Certification. For example, the Earth Science specialist program (ERSPE1465) curriculum is currently compliant with requirements for certification by the Professional Geoscientists Ontario regulatory body.

Table 1: Program Enrolment and Graduation

Degree	UTM Start Session	Program Start Session	Program Completion Session	Graduation Session	Degree Conferral Date
ER HBSC	20149	20175	20195	20199	2019-11-04
ER HBSC	20149	20165	20191	20195	2019-06-06

Data Source: Program Enrollment Ad-hoc tool and ROSI-REPLICA

Date of Retrieval: September 27, 2024

2 Academic Rationale

- **Discuss the academic rationale for the closure including alignment with the unit's academic plan and connection to any previous reviews.**
- **Discuss any resource implications.**

Launched in 2014 as a joint program between the Departments of Chemical and Physical Sciences (CPS) and Geography, Geomatics and Environment (GGE), the Environmental Geosciences specialist program (ERSPE1253) was created with the objective of fulfilling the knowledge requirements for certification as a Professional Geoscientist (P. Geo.) in conformity with the stipulations of the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario (APGO) and the Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG). The original course plan led students towards a P.Geo. designation upon graduation and individual application through the APGO.

However, since then, the program has experienced several issues including: changed course contents and learning outcomes (which has impacted APGO certification), lack of prerequisite high school courses to complete the first-year foundation sciences required for students to obtain their P.Geo certification, and inability to offer required courses each year (e.g. GGR307H5, GGR309H5). In addition, the program has consistently experienced very low student interest, with only two graduates since its launch, and no students enrolled in the past five years.

In 2019-2020, the CPS department restructured the curricula of two Earth Sciences programs, including the Earth Science specialist program (ERSPE1465), which rendered the Environmental Geosciences specialist program obsolete. Students interested in this field of study and aiming to meet APGO requirements can now follow one of the two pathways in the Earth Science specialist program (Resources, Hazards & Tectonics Pathway, or Earth, Climate, & Life Pathway) to achieve this outcome. The Earth Science Specialist program (ERSPE1465) meets the requirements for certification by the Professional Geoscientists Ontario regulatory body.

Closing the Environmental Geosciences specialist program will not have any resource implications on either the GGE or CPS departments, such as course offerings or teaching loads, as this program's objective has been functionally replaced by another specialist program that has been running for several years. As well, the program closure would not have a negative impact on students in GGE or CPS programs because those students who have the adequate science foundation for APGO designation can still pursue this certification post-degree completion. Interested students would be guided to the GGE department where the Physical Geography Program Advisor is available to provide information to students with information on this process.

Please note, this specialist program had a stream for the UTM Co-op Internship Program (UTMCIP), which is also proposed for closure (through a separate governance proposal).

3 Impact of Closure on Divisional and Other Programs/Units

- **Discuss the impact on the nature and quality of the division's program of study.**
- **Discuss the impact of closure on other units including inter-divisional and inter-institutional agreements/contracts.**

Closure of the program allows for the time and resources dedicated to the administration of the Environmental Geosciences program to be invested in other programs within the GGE department that see more significant enrollment numbers.

Students can continue to take courses in the GGE programs that are included in the Earth Science program.

Closure of the program is not anticipated to impact planned course offerings, nor any other programs of study at UTM.

4 Impact on Students

Please provide the current enrolment showing breakdown by year of study in the program or program option being closed.

4.1 Table 2: Undergraduate

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

Referring to the table above, discuss the impact on and accommodation of any students currently enrolled in the program.

There are no students currently enrolled in the program; therefore, no accommodation plan is needed.

There has been very low student interest in this program. As shown in Table 3, only a handful of students request program entry each year, and of those who meet the entry requirements, none have enrolled in the past several years.

Any students interested in the P.Geo. designation can still obtain information and plan their course paths through the Earth Science specialist program (ERSPE1465), which includes courses offered by both CPS and GGE departments.

Therefore, closure of this program is not expected to have an impact on the range of academic options available to UTM students in the future.

Table 3: Program Entry Data

Department	Subject POST Name	Year	Round	Requested					Admitted					Accepted					Refused					Cancelled				
				0	2	4	6	8	100	0	2	4	6	8	100	0	2	4	6	8	100	0	2	4	6	8	100	
CHMPS	SP ENVIRONMENTAL GEOSCIENCES	2017	Latest Round1	<div><div></div></div> 6					<div><div></div></div> 2					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 3					<div><div></div></div> 1				
			Latest Round2	<div><div></div></div> 8					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 6					<div><div></div></div> 2				
		2018	Latest Round1	<div><div></div></div> 3					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 2				
			Latest Round2	<div><div></div></div> 3					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 2					<div><div></div></div> 1				
		2019	Latest Round1	<div><div></div></div> 2					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 1				
			Latest Round2	<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0				
		2020	Latest Round1	<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 1				
			Latest Round2	<div><div></div></div> 3					<div><div></div></div> 2					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 1				
		2021	Latest Round2	<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0				
			2022	Latest Round1	<div><div></div></div> 5					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 3					<div><div></div></div> 2			
		Latest Round2		<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0				
		2023	Latest Round1	<div><div></div></div> 1					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 1				
			Latest Round2	<div><div></div></div> 3					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 0					<div><div></div></div> 3				

Data source: Subject Program Admissions Dashboard (Academic Analytics)

Date accessed: September 22, 2024

5 Consultation

- **Discuss consultation with affected divisions, units, faculty and students.**

Department Chairs from both CPS and GGE departments, in consultation with Departmental Academic Advisors from both units, have been involved in discussions of program closure for several years, due to changing course content and observed lack of interest from students. In spring 2024, both Department Chairs (GGE: Brown & CPS: Schoenbohm) confirmed program closure should proceed.

There are no current students enrolled in the program; therefore, student consultation involved students in other GGE and CPS programs. Students were informed about the

program closure on March 20, 2025, and were given an open forum to provide feedback and ask questions. Students are already aware of the Earth Science specialist program option for pursuing this area of study and obtaining APGO certification through existing channels of program selection and academic advising.

This proposal was shared with Faculty of Arts & Science: Departments of: Geography & Planning; Earth Sciences; Chemistry; Physics; and the School of the Environment – no questions or comments were received.