

FOR RECOMMENDATION

PUBLIC

OPEN SESSION

TO: UTSC Campus Affairs Committee

SPONSOR: Prof. Mark Schmuckler, Interim Vice-Principal Academic & Dean
CONTACT INFO: vpdean.utsc@utoronto.ca

PRESENTER: Prof. George Arhonditsis, Vice-Dean, Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
CONTACT INFO: vdgraduate.utsc@utoronto.ca

DATE: September 2, 2026 for September 10, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 5

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Closure of SoundLife Scarborough as an Extra-Departmental Unit D (EDU:D) at the University of Toronto Scarborough

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The UTSC Campus Affairs Committee “is concerned with matters that directly concern the quality of student and campus life. The Committee is also responsible for monitoring, reviewing and making recommendations concerning a broad range of planning issues and priorities and for “the use of campus resources.” (*UTSC Campus Affairs Committee Terms of Reference*, Section 4). Under Section 5.8.1 of the *UTSC Campus Affairs Committee Terms of Reference*, “the Committee recommends to the UTSC Council on plans and proposals to establish, disestablish, or significantly restructure academic units, here defined as faculties, schools, colleges, departments, centres and institutes with teaching, or teaching and research functions, undergraduate degree programs, and graduate degree programs, regardless of the source of funds.”

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. **UTSC Campus Affairs Committee [For Recommendation]: September 10, 2026**
2. **UTSC Campus Council [For Approval]: October 7, 2026**

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

No previous action in governance has been taken on this item.

HIGHLIGHTS:

This is a proposal to formally close SoundLife Scarborough (SLS) as an Extra-Departmental Unit D (EDU:D), effective December 31, 2026. A companion proposal to establish SoundLife Scarborough as an Extra-Departmental Unit C (EDU:C), effective January 1, 2027, is being brought forward separately through the applicable governance process.

SoundLife Scarborough was established on July 1, 2022, as an EDU:D housed in the Department of Arts, Culture and Media at UTSC. Its purpose was to incubate an interdisciplinary hub focused on community-engaged music research, research-creation, and participatory music-making rooted in reciprocity, inclusion, and well-being.

During its time as an EDU:D, SLS:

- built a strong network of faculty members within the Department of Arts, Culture and Media, and across UTSC and the St. George campus (UTSG);
- developed sustained partnerships with community organizations across Scarborough and the eastern GTA;
- supported student experiential learning and research training;
- catalyzed new scholarly events, archives, and public-facing research activities; and
- secured prestigious external funding administered through faculty members' home units.

These accomplishments demonstrate that SLS has successfully carried out the activities envisioned under its EDU:D plans. The proposed closure of the EDU:D is being brought forward as part of a coordinated governance process alongside the separate proposal to establish SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:C.

The proposed closure of SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:D is not expected to have a negative impact on students, faculty, staff, or community partners. Subject to completion of the applicable governance process for the companion EDU:C establishment proposal, the consecutive effective dates of the two proposals will support continuity in the entity's research, academic, and community-engaged activities.

In parallel with the proposed establishment of SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:C, the development of this closure proposal involved extensive consultation. The proposal was circulated to all sixteen departments, as well as other centres and institutes and the Library within UTSC. Consultation also took place with other U of T divisions, including the Faculty of Arts & Science, the Faculty of Information, the Faculty of Music, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), the University of Toronto Mississauga, and the Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The proposed closure of SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:D is not expected to have adverse financial implications. In accordance with the University's *Guidelines for Extra-Departmental Units*, the EDU:D does not administer research funds.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be It Recommended to the UTSC Campus Council:

THAT the closure of SoundLife Scarborough as an Extra-Departmental Unit D (EDU:D) at the University of Toronto Scarborough, as described in the Proposal for the Closure of an Existing Extra-Departmental Unit, dated August 18, 2026, be approved effective December 31, 2026.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

1. Proposal for the Closure of an Existing Extra-Departmental Unit: SoundLife Scarborough, dated August 18, 2026

Proposal for the Closure of an Existing Extra-Departmental Unit

Name of Extra-Departmental Unit (EDU):	SoundLife Scarborough
Extra-Departmental Unit Status:	EDU:D
Faculty/Division:	University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)
Dean's Office Contact:	George Arhonditsis, Vice-Dean Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (vdgraduate.utsc@utoronto.ca) Kevin Mak, Manager, Academic Program Reviews & Quality Assurance (kevin.mak@utoronto.ca)
Version Date:	August 18, 2026

Statement of Purpose

This is a proposal to formally close SoundLife Scarborough (SLS) as an EDU:D, effective December 31, 2026. Replacing the EDU:D is SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:C, effective January 1, 2027. The proposal to create the EDU:C is being brought forward in parallel with this proposal, and is subject to governance approval.

Since its establishment in 2022, SoundLife Scarborough has grown significantly in scale, scope, and institutional integration. It now leads multi-year research projects that are externally funded (with resources administered in its home unit of Arts, Culture and Media); coordinates interdisciplinary and tri-campus faculty collaborations; sustains deep, reciprocal community partnerships; and supports undergraduate and graduate student training through research-creation and experiential learning. These activities exceed the mandate and structural capacity of the EDU:D framework. Closure of the EDU:D is therefore a necessary and constructive governance step to ensure clarity, compliance, and continuity.

This closure does not represent a cessation of SoundLife Scarborough's work. Rather, it is part of a planned governance transition that reflects the unit's maturation and positions it for sustained impact under the EDU:C framework.

Background on the EDU:D

SoundLife Scarborough was established on July 1, 2022 as an EDU:D housed in the Department of Arts, Culture and Media at UTSC. Its purpose was to incubate an interdisciplinary hub focused on community-engaged music research, research-creation, and participatory music-making rooted in reciprocity, inclusion, and well-being.

During its time as an EDU:D, SLS:

- built a strong network of faculty members within the Department of Arts, Culture and Media, and across UTSC and the St. George campus (UTSG);
- developed sustained partnerships with community organizations across Scarborough and the eastern GTA;
- supported student experiential learning and research training;
- catalyzed new scholarly events, archives, and public-facing research activities; and
- secured prestigious external funding administered through faculty members' home units.

These accomplishments demonstrate that SLS has successfully carried out the ambitions laid out in its EDU:D plans and is well on its way to exceeding it.

SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:D has never been reviewed. With the decision to shift SoundLife Scarborough from an EDU:D to an EDU:C, a review of the EDU:D was deemed unnecessary.

Rationale for Closure

The proposed closure of SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:D is grounded in growth, success, and institutional alignment, rather than inactivity or redundancy. Specifically:

1. Growth Beyond the EDU:D Mandate

EDU:Ds are intended to support research initiatives that are limited to a single discipline and department. SoundLife Scarborough has now outgrown this framework. As documented in the proposal to establish a new EDU:C, SLS:

- coordinates multi-unit and tri-campus collaborations;
- supports highly qualified personnel (graduate students, research assistants, teaching artists);
- stewards significant research assets (e.g., the Scarborough Music Archive);
- hosts major scholarly and public events of national and international scope; and
- anchors long-term, community-engaged research relationships.

The EDU:D framework lacks the formal governance, stability, and recognition required to sustain this level of activity.

2. Governance Clarity and Structural Integrity

Maintaining SoundLife Scarborough simultaneously as an EDU:D while it operates at an EDU:C scale creates misalignment with the University's Guidelines for Extra-Departmental Units.

Formal closure of the EDU:D:

- eliminates ambiguity about mandate and accountability;
- ensures consistency between operational reality and governance structure; and
- upholds institutional standards for EDU classification.

3. Continuity Through Planned Transition

The closure of the EDU:D is directly tied to the proposed establishment of SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:C, with no interruption to activities, partnerships, or personnel. The unit's work, leadership, and community relationships will continue seamlessly under the new unit structure, with UTSC as Lead Division and oversight by the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean.

Impact of Closure

The closure of SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:D will have **no negative impact** on students, faculty, staff, or community partners. Specifically:

- No teaching initiatives or research projects are being terminated.
- No staff positions or student roles are being eliminated.
- All research funding continues to be held and administered through faculty members' home units, as required.
- Community relationships remain intact and are explicitly strengthened under the proposed EDU:C structure.

Instead, the closure will:

- improve transparency and governance alignment;
 - enable appropriate oversight and review mechanisms; and
 - support the long-term sustainability of SoundLife Scarborough's research and community-engaged activities.
-

Consultation

Consultation regarding this proposed closure has been conducted in parallel with consultations for the establishment of SoundLife Scarborough as a new EDU:C, with focus on the Department of Arts, Culture, and Media, which currently is the administrative home of the EDU:D.

The proposal for the establishment of SoundLife Scarborough as an EDU:C was circulated within UTSC, as well as to relevant divisions across the University of Toronto from February to June 2026 for input and feedback.

Within UTSC:

- All sixteen academic departments
- Centres and Institutes: Centre for Global Disability Studies; Culinarium Research Centre; Institute for Environment, Conservation, and Sustainability (IECS); Institute for Inclusive Economies and Sustainable Livelihoods (IIESL)
- UTSC Library

Outside UTSC:

- Faculty of Arts & Science
- Faculty of Information
- Faculty of Music
- Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)
- University of Toronto Mississauga
- Dalla Lana School of Public Health

Since the EDU:C establishment proposal already outlines SoundLife Scarborough's background, growth beyond the EDU:D framework, and readiness for establishment as an EDU:C, a more streamlined approach was undertaken for the EDU:D closure proposal. The proposal was circulated in May 2026 to the Department of Arts, Culture and Media within UTSC, as well as to the Faculty of Arts & Science, the Faculty of Information, the Faculty of Music, OISE, and the University of Toronto Mississauga, for input and feedback.

Key points that have emerged through both rounds of consultation include:

- broad internal support for transitioning SLS from an EDU:D to an EDU:C;
- recognition that SLS has evolved beyond the EDU:D framework;
- no concerns raised by departments, centres, or divisions consulted; and
- no concerns raised by community partners regarding continuity or mission;

Because the closure forms part of a planned and supported governance transition, rather than the discontinuation of activities, consultation respondents indicated that this step is appropriate and necessary.

Effective Date

- **Closure of SoundLife Scarborough (EDU:D):** December 31, 2026 (pending approval)
- **Proposed Establishment of SoundLife Scarborough (EDU:C):** January 1, 2027 (pending approval)