



FOR APPROVAL

PUBLIC

OPEN SESSION

TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

SPONSOR: Susan McCahan, Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
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PRESENTER: Same as above.
CONTACT INFO:

DATE: April 30, 2024 for May 8, 2024

AGENDA ITEM: 3

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Proposal for the closure of the Specialist in Health Studies (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 8, 2024)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The proposal to close the Specialist in Health Studies was approved at the Faculty of Arts and Science Faculty Council meeting on April 17, 2024.

HIGHLIGHTS:

This is a proposal to close the Specialist in Health Studies offered by University College, Faculty of Arts and Science. The program explores how health around the world is shaped by the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, and how these in turn connect to a wider set of environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political forces.

The decision to close the Health Studies Specialist takes into consideration the results of the previous 2019 UTQAP review; declining enrolment in the Specialist program; and the desire to re-allocation of resources into the major program, which is more popular among students. The 2019 UTQAP Cyclical

Review identified the value of Health Studies but also noted structural and resource issues in the program. Following the 2019 review, the Dean's office discussed the reviewers' recommendations with the Health Studies Program Director and the Vice-Principal of University College and developed an implementation plan. During those discussions, the idea of closing the Specialist was raised and in 2023, the decision was made to close the program.

Admissions to the Specialist were administratively suspended as of February 5, 2024. There are currently 14 active students registered in the Specialist in Health Studies. These students will be supported to complete their program. The date of the Specialist's closure, August 31, 2028, was selected because it allows four years for the four students who will be going into their fourth year September 2024 to complete their requirements. Since the Major will remain open, these Specialist will be able to select the appropriate courses to complete their program.

The Major in the area is being changed through a separate major modification proposal which will rename the program to Public Health and include a curriculum renewal that involves the participation of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. These changes are effective September 2024.

Consultation on the closure has occurred within the Faculty of Arts and Science with faculty and students as outlined in the proposal.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The financial implications of the proposal are outlined in this section.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be It Resolved

THAT the proposed closure of the Specialist in Health Studies, Faculty of Arts and Science, dated March 18, 2024, to which admissions were administratively suspended on February 5, 2024, be approved with an anticipated program closure date of August 31, 2028.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

- Proposal

University of Toronto Proposal:

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

Framework for UTQAP program 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.

The University of Toronto embraces academic change as a critical part of maintaining and enhancing programs of outstanding quality through a process of continuous improvement. Proposals for graduate programs are vehicles of academic change.

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 January 16, 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.

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).	Health Studies Specialist (Arts Program) - ASSPE2085
Department/unit if applicable:	University College
Faculty/academic division:	Faculty of Arts & Science
Faculty/academic division contact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gillian Hamilton, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning • Randy Boyagoda, Vice-Dean, Undergraduate • Caitlin Burton, Manager, Academic Change & Reviews • Kevin Mak, Associate Director, Governance and Curriculum Services
Department/unit contact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleen Dockstader, Director, Health Studies, University College • Bob Gibbs, Acting Vice-Principal, University College • Markus Stock, Principal, University College
Effective date when admissions were administratively suspended:	Enrolment in the program has been administratively suspended effective February 5, 2024
Effective date of full closure of program: date by which students currently in the program will be expected to graduate.	August 31, 2028
Version date: please change as you edit this proposal.	March 18, 2024

Steps	Dates
Decanal sign-off	March 5, 2024
VPAP sign-off	March 18, 2024
Faculty/divisional council (approval of closure of minors, where there is a continuing specialist or major)	Joint Undergraduate Curriculum Committee: March 27, 2024 Arts & Science Council: April 17, 2024
Submission to Provost's office	
AP&P (approval of program closures: undergrad specialists/majors; minors where there is no specialist or major; graduate fields or diploma; and collaborative programs)	May 8, 2024
Academic Board (approval of degree, graduate program, diploma closures)	Not Applicable
Executive Committee of Governing Council (executive confirms degree, grad program, closures)	Not Applicable
Inclusion in annual report to Quality Council	Not Applicable

Executive Summary

Please provide a brief summary of the closure being proposed.

This is a proposal for the closure of the Health Studies Specialist, administered by University College.

The current Health Studies program explores how health around the world is shaped by the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, and how these in turn connect to a wider set of environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political forces. It is an interdisciplinary program aimed at challenging students to think about health in new ways, both locally and globally.

Historically, the Health Studies program has offered both a Major in Health Studies (8.0 FCE), and a Specialist in Health Studies (12.0). The decision to close the Specialist is due to consistently declining student enrolment and the program's desire to create a more sustainable and robust Health Studies program, which involves focusing on the existing Major, which is much more popular with students. Admissions to the Specialist were administratively suspended as of February 5, 2024. Only four students will be enrolled in the Specialist for the 2024-25 academic year. With the proposed closure of the Specialist, remaining students will be able to complete their program – no required course will be cancelled. Only the Specialist is proposed to be closed. The Major will remain open and is being changed through a separate major modification proposal which will rename the program to Public Health and include a curriculum renewal that involves the participation of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH) to support the renamed Public Health Major through DLSPH faculty members teaching in the

Major. Ultimately these changes will strengthen the program through streamlining and focusing resources.

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.

Past success of the HST program.

The Health Studies program began in 2002 to respond to needs for educational opportunities on health issues and health systems. There were strong connections between the nascent program and the CIHR-funded Centre for Urban Health Initiatives (which has since closed). In recent years, Health Studies has grown significantly, to its current size of approximately 150 students in the Specialist, Major. (~95% of HST students enrolled in the Major). While still relatively small by University of Toronto standards, this program has created an environment where many students know each other and create a sense of community while providing students with a diverse range of courses as well as research and practicum opportunities.

Full Academic Rationale: Creating a More Sustainable and Robust Program

The 2019 UTQAP Cyclical Review identified the value of Health Studies as an option for students, but also noted structural and resource issues in the program. The UTQAP reviewers recommended major changes be applied to create a sustainable program. Following the 2019 review, the Dean's office has discussed the reviewers' recommendations with the Health Studies Program Director and the Vice-Principal of University College and developed an implementation plan. During those discussions, the idea of closing the Specialist was discussed and in 2023, the decision was made to close the program.

Considerations in closing the HST Specialist.

The decision to close the Health Studies Specialist takes into consideration the results of the 2019 UTQAP review, as well as the following factors:

1. Declining enrollment in the Specialist stream.
 - Data on the Specialist program in Health Studies show that number of Specialists has always been low. In 2009, there were 2 enrollments which climbed slowly to a maximum of 11 new enrollments in 2019. Since then, the Specialist enrollment has declined as a percentage of the overall program with 0 new Specialist enrollments in 2023-24 and only 4 remaining Specialists for the 2024-25 year. Concurrently, Major enrollment has consistently increased. This pattern of a decrease in Specialist enrollment is consistent with numbers across

the university; students increasingly prefer to combine two or more programs of study

2. Most students prefer to do two majors.

- More students in Health Studies are choosing to do a double major in complementary fields. Based on a recent survey (Oct 26, 2023) approximately 65% of our students' other major is in a health-related BSc field (i.e.- Human Biology, Immunology, Psychology).
- Double majors allow students to gain a wider breadth of knowledge, and this has grown to be a more popular degree option for students. Pairing majors is seen as a more strategic degree outcome in a world that requires considerable change and adapting as well as the inter-collaborative nature of health programs.

3. Re-allocation of resources.

- Given the low interest of students, and their perceived lack of added value of the Specialist program, the program has decided to allocate resources into the far more popular Major program. Notably, resources will not be lost but will be invested into the Major so that *all* Health Studies students will have access to an interdisciplinary and dynamic curriculum that will provide a breadth of skills and knowledge. This strategy aligns with the President's priorities to "Leverage our Strengths" and "Enhance Academic Programming" (<https://threepriorities.utoronto.ca>) as well as the A&S goal of "enhancing Academic Programming and the Student Experience" ([A&S Academic Plan 2020-2025](#)).

Students will continue to be able to take the Major offering, which is currently being revised through a separate major modification proposal. The goals of the Major program will remain the same – to create an opportunity for undergraduate students to engage in multidisciplinary study of health issues and to ensure students have the skills they need to help solve health challenges locally and globally, in an academically rigorous environment. The revised Major program curriculum has been reorganized to be more cogent, streamlined, and contemporary, while expanding collaborations and opportunities that come from that such as consistent faculty, expertise, and new avenues for experiential learning. The name is also changing to "Major in Public health" to better reflect the increased focus on public health and the new interdivisional collaboration with the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH). These changes will create a more sustainable and robust program with a curriculum that will enhance their Health Studies learning experience and provide skill sets and knowledge the current majors do not always receive.

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.

Positive and Negative Implications of Removing Specialist. There are many positives around removing the Specialist, as already mentioned, in particular the re-allocation of resources to the strongly-preferred Major program. Negative implications include: 1) no longer offering a more specialized program to new students; 2) any stress or negative feelings incurred by current Specialists.

The nature and quality of the Health Studies Program will not be negatively impacted. All courses currently offered will remain, moreover, based on the concurrent major modification to the Health Studies Major, all students will have more course choices and opportunities for experiential learning. In particular, experiential learning opportunities have only been required for Specialists in the past – whereas all students will require an experiential learning opportunity moving forward with the proposed changes to the Health Studies Major.

All of the courses that form the basis of the Health Studies Specialist will continue to be offered, so students will continue to get exposure to the different research methods as they relate to the public health field.

All relevant units were consulted, none expressed concern. Our HST courses will continue to serve as valid completion options for programs offered by academic units such as New College, the School of the Environment, the Department of Statistical Sciences, Innis College, and the Women and Gender Studies Institute.

Impact on Students

- Please provide 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 in Specialist in Health Studies	NA	0	4	10

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

There are currently 14 active students registered in the Specialist in Health Studies. These students will be supported to complete their program.

The date of the Specialist's closure, August 31, 2028, was selected because it allows four years for the four students who will be going into their fourth year September 2024 to complete their requirements. The effective date provides up to 3 years longer than a typical degree that takes 4-5 years. Should any student run into financial and/or personal difficulties that extends beyond the deadline, we will have 1-2 years, at least, to discuss potential scenarios and seek permission for special considerations if necessary. Since the Major will remain open, these Specialist will be able to select the appropriate courses to complete their program.

Dating from 2004 – 2020, there are 17 inactive students who did not complete the program and are not currently enrolled with ARTSCI. As the most recently-enrolled of the students was last registered as a student in 2020, the students could be considered for re-enrolment up to September 2026, with an estimated two additional years to complete the program for its official termination in August 2028. If any students choose to return after the closure date, they would be supported to complete the Major.

Once the program closure has been approved through governance, University College/Health Studies will notify electronically all students currently enrolled in the Health Studies Specialist to outline their options: (1) complete the remaining requirements of the Specialist based on the year they joined in the Specialist, or (2) consider switching to the modified (if approved) Health Studies Major as of March 1, 2025, which would coincide with the start of the 2025 Arts & Science program enrolment period. In addition, information about the closure will be published in the 2024-25 Arts & Science Academic Calendar, slated for publication in mid-May 2024.

Consultation

- Discuss consultation with affected divisions, units, faculty and students.
- **Consultations with Programs/Units/Faculties around Removal of Specialist.** We consulted with the following academic units: Anthropology, Cell and Systems Biology, Geography and Planning, Women and Gender Studies Institute, Statistical Sciences, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Human Biology, Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, Anatomy, History, IHPST, Pharmacology and Toxicology, Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology. There were no concerns around closing the HST Specialist program.

- **October 2023 – student survey for Specialists.** Fourteen Specialists were invited to participate in survey around closing the Specialist program. Seven responded. Of those seven students, the majority were concerned about the closure. Concerns included:
 - That, due to being able to take more credits in the Health Studies program, the Specialist track allows them to take more courses on topics which they feel are beneficial for studies at the graduate level.
 - that they must pursue an undergraduate research project, which provides important experiential learning opportunities
 - that they like the interdisciplinary nature of the program and the freedom of exploring so many topics in public health
- **Nov 24, 2023 - UC College Council.** One HST Specialist attended the UC Council meeting and was expressed serious concern about the closure. Principal Markus Stock agreed that more consultations needed to be had.
- **Nov 28, 2023. Consultation with DLSPH** around retiring the Specialist. Acting Dean of DLSPH expressed that a double major in complementary fields (i.e., Public Health and Immunology) can be more strategic and make the student more competitive in a public health environment that is constantly adapting, changing, and highly inter-disciplinary.
- **Nov 28, 2023. Consultations with the Health Studies Student Union and the Specialist who attended the Council Meeting.**

Two issues identified:

1. students were concerned about the stability of a program with only a major option. They thought that removing the Specialist would make the entire HST program more vulnerable to closing. The Director carefully went through the objectives of the major modification that include collaboration with other units and that the significance of securing an inter-divisional relationship with DLSPH is the best way to ensure program stability. They had a clearer understanding of this now and, the students at the meeting, recognized that the changes aim to secure the program, rather than make it less stable.
2. Students were concerned about the loss of experiential learning as the Specialists must graduate with a research project course. The Director walked them through the curriculum changes to show that, with the major modification, all students in the Major would be required to do an

experiential learning course for graduation. Currently students in the Major are not required to do this. The experiential learning requirement will come in the form of HST480H1 (Independent Research in Health Studies). Additionally, securing more full year research projects is more likely with collaborations with DLSPH and a stronger program identity. Again, students were notably satisfied with this response.

- **Dec 6, 2023.** Director Colleen Dockstader joined the HST student general fall meeting. There was an extensive discussion on the *curriculum* changes, which are at the heart of the major modification of the existing Health Studies Major with some further discussion of the Specialist closure. The Director took the opportunity to discuss the details of the changes and how they would be beneficial to new graduates – providing skill sets and knowledge the current students do not always receive. Students were positive in their response to the changes.