

Approved minutes for Meeting 96 of the Athabasca University General Faculties Council held on January 29, 2026 via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Alex Clark (Chair), Carrie Anton, Walid Belassi, Derek Briton, Shauna Bryce, Kia Buchanan, Caroline Buzanko, Priscilla Campeau, Andrew Chiarella, Martha Cleveland-Innes, Liam Connelly, Alexa DeGagne, Ali Dewan, Richard Dixon, Elaine Fabbro, Stella George, Osire Glacier, Lisa Gray, Ramses Ilarraza, Steven Johnson, Stuart Johnston, Dietmar Kennepohl, Anshuman Khare, Angela Kuzyk, Michael Lithgow, Denver Ma, Manijeh Mannani, Marc Nesca, Amy Neumann, Hugh Notman, Kristen Petrovic, Frédérique Pivot, Adnan Qayyum, Diana Ramirez, Ann Reynolds, Simon Sigué, Serita Smith, Ian Stephenson, Catherine Swindlehurst, Norin Taj, Tyler Tollefson, Eric Wang, Harris Wang, Ray Welshman, Krystal Zahara, Shauna Zenteno

Regrets: Joel English-Dubois, Glen Farrelly, Candy Khan, Jan Lehmann, Rebeccah Nelems, Cori Paul, Fayez Seifeddine, Adrienne Weare

Governance Staff: Tyler Tollefson (Chief Governance Officer and General Counsel), Eileen Hendy (Governance Coordinator), and Allison Strydhorst (Recording Secretary)

The Chair delivered the AU Land Acknowledgment, and welcomed the new member Serita Smith, Interim Associate Vice President Students.

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 1.1 **Motion 96-01 That General Faculties Council approves the agenda and thereby approves the consent agenda, as presented.**

Zenteno/Dixon

Carried

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Subject to the [Code of Conduct for Members of the University Community](#) and the Conflict of Interest provision (clauses 11.1 and 11.2) of the [General Faculties Council Rules](#), members will be asked to declare any conflict they may have with respect to particular agenda items contained within the meeting agenda.

No conflicts declared.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 3.1 **Motion 96-02 That General Faculties Council approves the minutes of Meeting 93 held November 20, 2025, as presented.**

Kennepohl/Dewan

Carried

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chair Report to GFC

The Chair presented this item noting:

- effects of global events on the post-secondary sector
- the launch of new accessibility services platform, AU Accommodate

- faculty initiatives being undertaken for student and teaching successes
- working continuing for the Academic Plan consultation

4.2 Faculty of Business Quarterly Report

The Interim Dean, Faculty of Business presented this item.

4.3 Faculty of Health Disciplines Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Health Disciplines presented this item.

4.4 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences presented this item.

4.5 Faculty of Science and Technology Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology presented this item.

4.6 Faculty of Graduate Studies Quarterly Report

The Interim Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies presented this item.

Following the presentations of the faculty quarterly reports, discussions were held on:

- artificial intelligence software and assessments
- limitations for nursing seats for students across Canada
- high enrolment numbers in graduate programs
- providing additional information to students on Athabasca University's values, reputation, academic integrity, and programs to build relationships.

Break: 2:19-2:35 p.m.

5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 5.1 Motion 96-03 That General Faculties Council approves the appointment of the Associate Dean of graduate programs (or other representative designated by the faculty) from each faculty other than the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and the Associate and Vice Deans of the Faculty of Graduate Studies to the Faculty of Graduate Studies Faculty Council, effective January 29, 2026.**

Belassi/Fabbro

The Interim Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies presented this item.

Carried

- 5.2 Motion 96-04 That the General Faculties Council approves the termination of the Master of Business Administration Digital Business Transformation and Strategic Leadership and Change Specializations effective July 1, 2026, or thereafter at the discretion of the Provost and Vice-President Academic, subject to the approval by the Board of Governors and Alberta Advanced Education.**

George/Khare

The Interim Dean, Faculty of Business, and Professor – Operations Management co-presented this item

Carried

5.3 Motion 96-05

That General Faculties Council approves changes to the Master of Business Administration program regulations effective January 1, 2026, as follows:

FROM:**Capstone project**

The capstone project is normally associated with the end of Phase 3 of the MBA program, but students may receive permission to begin work on their capstone projects at any time during Phase 3 of their program.

The capstone project is graded on a pass/fail basis, with a grade of 70% required to pass. The course is worth 6 credits and must be completed in 10 weeks.

Students may select one of four pathways based on their professional goals and interests:

1. Primary Business Research Project – a scholarly investigation addressing a defined business question using primary data collection and analysis.
2. Consultancy Project – a practical engagement where the student acts as a consultant to a real organization, addressing a specific business challenge.
3. Applied Project – a project focused on the direct application of theoretical knowledge to a real-world business context, often using secondary data or case analysis.
4. Simulation – A simulated business experience conducted over 10 weeks, during which students manage key aspects of a virtual company and conclude with a reflective report analyzing their decisions and outcomes.

Capstone project registration

Registration for the capstone project is not automatic. The Graduate Capstone Project Registration Form must be filled out and submitted to Student Services at fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca.

The capstone project course starts every month except for the months of April and July. Registration and payment deadline is always the 10th of the month previous to the start date (i.e. Aug.10 is the deadline to register and pay for a Sep.1 start date).

Capstone project deferral process

A deferral is a request to alter the start date of your project.

If a student is unable to finish their Capstone Project Draft Proposal and submit it on or before the end of calendar Month 1 from the current start date as per the instructions provided, they may defer from the Capstone Project and re-start when they can make the ten-week time commitment. Only one deferral is allowed. If you fail to defer it is assumed you intend on completing the capstone project within your current ten-week time allowance. Otherwise, you may find it necessary to extend or withdraw.

Scenario #1: If you are deferring your capstone project prior to your current start date, please send an email requesting deferral to fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca.

Scenario #2: If you are deferring after your current start date, please follow the deferral instructions below and indicate the month in which you would like to restart.

Capstone project

I. To submit your deferral, click the pay now link below to go to the secure banking online payment site. As this is a secure site, you will be prompted to log in with your myAU password. If you have not set up your login information, click the "myAU Help Page for Students" link to set this up.

Important: Once signed into the pay now link, fill out the course withdrawal to defer your capstone project. Please type in the month (any month except for April or July) in which you would like to restart in the "Remain Inactive" section (do not use the drop-down menu).

Pay now

II. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that Student Enrolment Services has received your Capstone Project deferral. If you do not receive a confirmation from Student Enrolment Services within 3 to 5 business days of your request, you should immediately contact fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca.

Deferrals will not be processed without payment of the deferral fee.

Capstone project extensions

A student may request an extension to their Capstone Project completion date due to extenuating circumstances. An extension adds a one-month period to the end of your course contract. In such cases, the student must email the Capstone Project Coordinator at fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca to request the extension and provide details of the circumstances.

If the Coordinator grants an extension, there is a charge for each one-month extension. A maximum of two extensions may be granted. An extension must be requested each time it is required and must be requested prior to your contract end date. Failure to request the extension prior to your end date will result in a fail.

An extension should only be requested if you believe you will still be fully capable of completing your capstone project within the adjusted timeframe. Otherwise, you would be advised to withdraw from the course and either a) re-register for a later date or b) change to the course-based route of the MBA program.

If you are unable to still complete within an approved extended timeframe please see the withdrawal process below.

Capstone project withdrawals

If you are unable to complete the capstone project, you may choose to withdraw at any time prior to the final project being submitted or your contract ending. Students must submit a request to withdraw and pay the applicable fees as per the instructions below, depending on your scenario. For any inquiries with regard to withdrawing from your capstone project, please contact fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca.

Scenario #1: If you are withdrawing from the capstone project prior to the end of month 3 of your contract start date:

I. To submit your withdrawal, click the pay now link below to go to the secure banking online payment site. As this is a secure site, you will be prompted to log in with your myAU password. If you have not set up your login information, click the "myAU Help Page for Students" link to set this up.

Pay now

II. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that Student Enrolment Services has received your Capstone Project withdrawal. If you do not receive a confirmation from Student Enrolment Services within 3 to 5 business days of your request, you should immediately contact fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca.

Withdrawals will not be processed without payment of the withdrawal fee. Tuition will be refunded. You will receive a grade of "W" (withdrawal) on your transcript.

Scenario #2: If you are withdrawing after the end of month 1 of your contract start date: Fill out the Graduate Capstone Project Withdrawal Form and submit to fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca. No refunds will be given. Full tuition fees will be required if you choose to attempt the capstone project again. You will receive a grade of W on your transcript.

If you fail to withdraw and the project is not completed, you will fail and receive a grade of F and no refund will be issued.

Note: If withdrawing from the capstone project for a length of time outside of the maximum program length allowed a Program Continuation Fee may be required.

Capstone project re-registration

Only one re-registration is allowed in the capstone project.

Please fill out the registration form when you are ready to register again.

TO:

Capstone project

The capstone project is normally associated with the end of Phase 3 of the MBA program, but students may receive permission to begin work on their capstone projects at any time during Phase 3 of their program.

The capstone project is graded on a pass/fail basis. The course is worth 6 credits and must be completed in 10 weeks.

Students may select one of four pathways based on their professional goals and interests:

1. Primary Business Research Design Project (CAPS 696) –A scholarly project focused on designing an investigation to address a clearly defined business

question, including the formulation of research objectives, development of a methodological approach, and specification of primary data collection and analysis strategies.

2. Consultancy Project (CAPS 697) – a practical engagement where the student acts as a consultant to a real organization, addressing a specific business challenge.

3. Simulation (CAPS 698) – A simulated business experience conducted over 10 weeks, during which students manage key aspects of a virtual company and conclude with a reflective report analyzing their decisions and outcomes.

4. Applied Project (CAPS 699) – a project focused on the direct application of theoretical knowledge to a real-world business context, often through a literature review or using secondary data or case analysis.

Capstone project registration

Registration for the capstone project is not automatic. The Graduate Capstone Project Registration Form must be filled out and submitted to Student Services at fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca.

The capstone project course starts every month except for the months of April and July. Registration and payment deadline is always the 10th of the month previous to the start date (i.e. Aug.10 is the deadline to register and pay for a Sep.1 start date).

Capstone project proposal

The Capstone Project Proposal must be submitted by the end of week 1 after the course contract start date. Students may proceed with the Capstone only if the proposal is approved by the assigned Academic Area Manager (AAM). If the proposal is not approved, the student must either defer or withdraw. They cannot continue in the course without approval of their proposal. Similarly, the Interim Report must be approved by the AAM in order for the student to progress to the Final Capstone Report. No extensions are permitted for submitting the Capstone Project Proposal, but if the student is not able to complete the proposal by the end of Week 1, see Capstone project deferral process below.

Capstone project deferral process

A deferral is a request to alter the start date of your project.

If a student is unable to submit their Capstone Project Draft Proposal on or before the end of Week 1 from the current start date as per the instructions provided and have it approved by the AAM, they may defer from the Capstone Project and re-start on the first of the month when they can make the ten-week time commitment.

Only one deferral is allowed. If a student does not submit and have approved their Capstone Project Draft Proposal, and does not formally request a deferral by the end of Week 1, they must withdraw from the Capstone. Students who do not defer or withdraw will fail the course and an F (Fail) grade will be awarded. Full course tuition will be required to re-register.

I. To submit your deferral, click the pay now link below to go to the secure banking online payment site. As this is a secure site, you will be prompted to log in with your myAU password. If you have not set up your login information, click the "myAU Help Page for Students" link to set this up.

Important: Once signed into the pay now link, fill out the course withdrawal to defer your capstone project. Please type in the month (any month except for April or July) in which you would like to restart in the "Remain Inactive" section (do not use the drop-down menu).

Pay now

II. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that Student Enrolment Services has received your Capstone Project deferral. If you do not receive a confirmation from Student Enrolment Services within 3 to 5 business days of your request, you should immediately contact fbgradenrol@athabascau.ca.

Deferrals will not be processed without payment of the deferral fee.

Capstone project extensions

One extension of up to a maximum of two weeks is permitted for submitting the Capstone Project Final Report. No extensions are allowed for submitting the Capstone project proposal, which must be completed by the end of the first week of the course contract start date.

Capstone project withdrawals

Please refer to the course withdrawal regulations.

George/Dixon

The Interim Dean, Faculty of Business, and Professor – Operations Management co-presented this item. It was noted students will be provided with information about the registration approval requirement for the capstone project during the orientation session.

Carried

5.4 Nukskahtowin Update

The Associate Vice President Indigenous Conciliation presented this item and discussion held on naturalization of Indigenous Knowledge.

5.5 Academic Plan

The Provost and Vice President Academic presented this item noting a draft Academic Plan is targeted for presentation at the May GFC meeting. Discussion held on upcoming consultation sessions with student groups.

5.6 Learner Success and Learner Access

The Provost and Vice President Academic presented this item noting:

- the AU Service Centre and its learner centered approach
- the AU Accommodate software noting the difference seen in support for learners

Discussions were held on opportunities and barriers in supporting the needs of our learners, increasing community and connections between students and faculty and streamlining internal processes to enhance services to students.

5.7 Research Update

The Provost and Vice President Academic presented this item noting:

- a number of Tri-agency, non- Tri-Agency proposals have been submitted
- Canada Impact+ Research Training Awards competition details will be coming forth
- encouraging research outputs and research diversity in the faculties
- work continuing on supporting research graduate students to support research culture

Discussions were held on the community, supports, and collaboration that is required for graduate students and faculty conducting research work, and how other departments can help to foster research growth.

6. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA

None

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.