



**OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
AND VICE-PRESIDENT ACADEMIC**

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Academic Council

FROM: Dr Deborah Saucier, Provost & Vice President Academic

RE: Operationalizing a break in the Fall term

DATE: March 3, 2016

Over the past two years we have been seriously reviewing a break in the fall term. A major hurdle to implementing a break was the fact that we did not have time in the fall; but, this was elevated in 2013/14 when Academic Council agreed to move from a 64 to 60 day term (or 12 contact days for each day of the week). Further information can be found at: <http://www.uoit.ca/footer/about/governance/office-of-the-provost/pacip/PACIP-committees/Sem-committee/updates.php>

With the barrier removed we sent out a survey to students, faculty and staff asking if they would like to have a break and 84% of 1,125 responses said yes. However, the duration and timing of the break was not as clear – see appendix A for a response summary.

Haven looked at the options, weighing the pros and cons, and through consultations with the Senior Academic Team as well as Academic Council Executive I am putting forward the idea of a four day co-curricular break.

We are using the term co-curricular as it is defined as “being outside of but usually complementing the regular curriculum”. These days will not be holidays but are rather normal working hours with no formally scheduled requirements (ie lectures or midterms). Although some may use the time for relaxation we are expecting some to use it as time to catch up in their studies, time to get together to complete group work, an opportunity to use the labs for capstone projects, or attend professional skills programs offered through Office of Graduate Studies and/or Student Life.

In Appendix B you will note that there is no one way that universities across Ontario are implementing this.

Although many benefits were noted for a week break tied to thanksgiving; such as, more time for actual reflection/relaxation, greater symmetry with Trent University in addition to a cleaner process for bi-weekly labs the downside was that in certain years exams would run right to December 23rd, the week may be too early as Thanksgiving normally falls after four contact weeks, and the need to keep more flexibility in case Ontario introduces a statutory holiday for Remembrance Day.

Appendix A Fall Term Break Survey Results

Would you like to see a Fall-term break at UOIT?

	Yes		No		Total
Faculty	60	83%	12	17%	72
Staff	53	76%	17	24%	70
Student	835	85%	148	15%	983
Total	948	84%	177	16%	1125

The majority of faculty, staff and students would like to see a Fall-term break.

Which type of break would you prefer?

	Five-day		Two-day		Total
Faculty	40	67%	20	33%	60
Staff	29	55%	24	45%	53
Student	500	60%	335	40%	835
Total	569	60%	379	40%	948

Of those who agreed to a fall term break, the majority, but not overwhelmingly, would like to see a five day break.

If UOIT decided to move forward with a two-day break it could be scheduled during the term or between the last class of the Fall term and the start of the final exam period. Which would you rather?

	A two-day break after four lectures		A two-day break after seven lectures		A two-day break between the last day of classes and the start of finals		Total
Faculty	5	8%	37	62%	18	30%	60
Staff	5	9%	26	49%	22	42%	53
Student	69	8%	323	39%	443	53%	835
Total	79	8%	386	41%	483	51%	948

When given the choice of when a two day break would be scheduled, the results are split between after 7 lectures and between the last day of classes and the start of finals. The majority of faculty and staff would like to see the break after seven lectures, whereas students would like the time after the last day of classes.

Comments

The comments tend to support the initial response to whether there should be a fall-term break or not. Students who do not support are concerned with extending the exam period and taking away from the Christmas break. With those that support, both students and faculty ask for a five day break around Thanksgiving. There are equally the amount of comments of having the 2 day study break for exams.

Faculty:

"Given that this is to benefit the students, I feel the best option would be to give the students a two-day break after the last day of classes that they can use for studying for final exams. A longer break in the middle of term may be viewed more as a "vacation" and may not be productive in terms of students getting extra help or studying. A break too early in the term (after four lectures) is too soon and I don't think it would serve students well, especially first year students who are still getting accustomed to how university works. Although a two-day break after seven lectures could be beneficial given this would be at midterm time, this might impact scheduling of laboratories and tutorials, especially those that are offered alternately in Week 1 for some students and Week 2 for others."

"The break should be scheduled during the week of Thanksgiving. That is only 4 extra days. A two day break will not give everyone a break- if they aren't in class those days, where is the break?"

Students:

"I would like extra time to prepare for final exams, as sometimes the end of term assignments and projects tie up a lot of term at the end of term, so a few extra days to prepare for exams would be appreciated."

"A break is definitely needed. Stress can overwhelm a student tremendously as I have experienced last semester. One way to alleviate this stress is to visit family. Although the two day break sounds like a great idea, the five day is way more beneficial. This is because students who live further away from home are given the opportunity to see their families."

Staff:

" Adding a two-day break at the end of the fall semester (after the last day of classes and before finals) would allow students more time to study and prepare for their final exams. Students oftentimes indicate that there is not a sufficient amount of time to study before final exams begin so this option would assist them in finding more time. Students currently only have one day free between the last day of the semester and the final exams, if the two-day break is introduced during this time, I hope that it will be in addition to the one day already given, for a total of three days. "

"I think a fall term break is a positive change. Our department works very closely with students (vulnerable ones) and there is usually a marked difference in students' ability to cope and manage between the fall semester and winter semester. I find that many students struggle with the fall semester because there is no break and there is no time to decompress or even time to catch up on readings or assignments. I think students often get overwhelmed in the fall semester because of this. I have worked at institutions where there is a fall reading break (5 days) and the contrast for me, is that students are better able to manage competing priorities when a break is incorporated into each semester.

Ultimately, I think any break, whether 2 or 5 days, would benefit students. I realize some staff don't want the term extended (and I'm sure some students might not either), but if we are focusing on what will benefit students the most, I think a longer break allows time for rest, catch-up, a mental break, an emotional break etc. etc. I think over the long term, the less stress that students are under or the more opportunity they are given to manage that stress, the less we as employees will have to spend time managing student crises, or working on retention strategies. I think a break would support all of these things, better student health (mental and physical), better staff wellness (proactive approaches to student well-being), improved retention rates, higher student satisfaction.... Sorry I'm digressing. I happy with whatever decision is made and think its great that we are looking for ways to better support students and our student retention :)"

Appendix B: Ontario University Academic Schedule

In 2013 12 of 20 had a break (5 had two day and 7 had the week). Since then 3 more have added. The early adopters were mainly 5 day while the more recent additions tend to lean towards two days.

University	Classes Schedule	Study Break		Exams Schedule	
Laurier	Sept. 9 - Dec. 2		2 day	Dec. 5 - Dec. 18	
Western	Sept. 9 - Dec. 6	Oct. 31 - Nov. 1	2	Dec. 8 - Dec. 19	
UOIT	Sept. 5 - Dec. 4		Open review	Dec. 6 - Dec. 18	
Carleton	Sept. 5 - Dec. 9	Oct. 28 - Nov. 1	5	Dec 11 - Dec. 22	
Ryerson	Sept. 3 - Dec. 2	Oct. 15 - Oct. 18	4 w/thanksgiving	Dec. 3 - Dec. 14	Stays with thanksgiving
Nipissing	Sept. 9 - Dec. 6	Oct. 15 - Oct. 18	4 w/thanksgiving	Dec. 9 - Dec. 21	Move to 5 days
Trent	Sept. 5 - Dec. 4	Oct. 21 - Oct. 25	5	Dec. 6 - Dec. 21	
Queen's	Sept. 9 - Nov. 29			Dec. 4 - Dec. 19	
Waterloo	Sept. 9 - Dec. 2		Review 2 day	Dec. 5 - Dec. 20	2 days after thanksgiving
Guelph	Sept. 5 - Nov. 28	Oct 15	1 w/thanksgiving	Dec. 2 - Dec. 13	
McMaster	Sept. 5 - Dec. 4	Oct. 31 - Nov. 1	2	Dec. 6 - Dec. 20	
U of T	Sept. 9 - Dec. 3	Nov. 11 - Nov. 12	2	Dec. 9 - Dec. 20	
York	Sept. 9 - Dec. 6	Oct. 30 - Nov. 1	2	Dec 10 - Dec. 23	
Windsor	Sept. 5 - Dec. 2		4 w/thanksgiving	Dec. 5 - Dec. 16	Stays with Thanksgiving
Brock	Sept. 4 - Dec. 3	Oct. 15 - Oct. 18	4 w/thanksgiving	Dec. 6 - Dec. 17	Stays with thanksgiving
Ottawa	Sept. 4 - Dec. 3	Oct. 15 - Oct. 18	4 w/thanksgiving	Dec. 5 - Dec. 18	Move to 5 days
Lakehead	Sept. 9 - Dec. 2		under Review	Dec. 5 - Dec. 17	Leaning towards 2
OCAD	Sept. 9 - Dec. 2		4 w/thanksgiving	Dec. 3 - Dec. 14	
Algoma	Sept. 9 - Dec. 3		No break	Dec. 5 - Dec. 17	
Laurentian	Sept. 4 - Dec. 4	Oct. 21 - Oct. 25	5	Dec. 5 - Dec. 22	

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

To: Academic Council
From: Brad MacIsaac, AVP Planning & Analysis, and Registrar
Re: GUIDELINES FOR THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR
Date: March 17, 2015

The following Guidelines apply only to those faculties which operate on a 60 day teaching term.

1. Scheduling the Start Date of Classes and Length of the First and Second Terms

Each fall and winter term will comprise a maximum of 12 teaching weeks comprising of 60 “lecture days”. Classes will not be held on public holidays or at other times as directed by the University Academic Council, administration or Board of Governors.

- Fall lectures will normally begin on the Thursday following Labour Day.
- Winter lectures will normally begin on the first Monday following January 2.
- Spring lectures (including the 60 day spring/summer and 30 day spring term) will normally begin on the second Monday in May (providing a week break after winter exams).
- Summer lectures will normally begin on the first working day after July 1.

The last day of registration for the term will be ten days (or equivalent for condensed terms) from and including the start date of the session (excluding weekends).

2. Scheduling Study Days and Examinations

- There will be at least one study day (including Saturdays and Sundays) between the completion of lectures and the first scheduled final examination.
- The total value of any tests or examinations given in the last five days of classes in a semester must be no more than 15 per cent of the final mark for the course (as per the [Academic Staff Responsibilities with Regard to Students](#)).
- The final examination period will be at least 10 days and runs *7 days a week including Saturday and Sunday (although Sunday is avoided if possible)*. No examinations are to be scheduled on Good Friday or Easter Sunday.

- The final day of examinations will be no later than December 22 in the first term and April 25 in the second term.
- Grades will be approved by the deans and due to the registrar's office within 5 calendar days of the last regularly scheduled exam. Normally they will be due by 10 am on the 5th day providing it is a day the registrar's office is open.
- For the summer session(s) faculty approved grades will be due to the registrar's office within 4 calendar days of the last regularly scheduled exam. Normally they will be due by 10 am on the 4th day providing it is a day the registrar's office is open.
- Term grades will be reviewed by a committee to discuss quality assurance during the first three weeks of the proceeding term.

3. Scheduling Co-curricular Break

A four-day co-curricular break will run in the fall term. This will normally be in week seven, for Thursday- Sunday subject to other statutory holidays. No formal classes are scheduled; but, faculties and units may use the time to hold optional activities.

4. Scheduling Winter Reading Week:

- Reading Week will be scheduled to align with Family Day in February. No formal classes are scheduled.

5. Scheduling Convocation Ceremonies

- June Convocation ceremonies will be scheduled in the first full week in June.

