



McGill

Memorandum

Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)
James Administration Building, Room 621

TO: Senate

FROM: Morton J. Mendelson, Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)
Chair, Committee on Enrolment and Student Affairs

SUBJECT: Proposed Changes to the Academic Calendar of Dates for 2011-2012

DATE: March 15, 2011

DOCUMENT #: D10-54

ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION DISCUSSION APPROVAL / DECISION

ISSUE: Revision to the Academic Calendar of Dates for 2011-2012 [approved by Senate on 28 April 2010 (D09-53)] to provide a longer break between semesters

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE: Many complaints have been received over the years about the University's relatively short break between the fall and winter semesters. International students, in particular, have complained that the short break does not provide sufficient time for a trip home. In addition, some faculty members feel that there is not enough time to mark December examinations and submit grades.

A recent survey of students indicated that a large majority were somewhat or very much in favor of lengthening the break between semesters. Faculties, however, strongly supported the maintenance of a 13-week semester for reasons of academic standards and, in some cases, accreditation. Therefore, other trade-offs were needed to find the time to lengthen the break. Students who were surveyed indicated that scheduling exams during evenings, which would result in a shorter exam period, was the least problematic trade-off of those offered, which also included starting the fall semester in August, ending the winter semester in May, or scheduling exams on one day during weekends.

The proposed revisions to the 2011-12 Academic Calendar of Dates (Appendix A) provides for a longer break between semesters without compromising teaching time. The highlights are presented here for the two semesters:

2011-12 Academic Calendar of Dates

	<i>Approved</i> 28 April 2010	<i>Proposed</i> 23 March 2011
Fall 2011		
Classes Begin	Thu, Sep 1	no change
Classes End	Mon, Dec 5	Tue, Dec 6
Exams Begin	Wed, Dec 7	Thu, Dec 8
Exams End	Thu, Dec 22	no change
Exam Period	12 days	11 days
Study Day	Tue, Dec 6	Wed, Dec 7

Winter 2012

Classes Begin	Tue, Jan 3	Mon, Jan 9
Classes End	Wed, Apr 11	Mon, Apr 16
Exams Begin	Fri, Apr 13	Tue, Apr 17
Exams End	Mon, Apr 30	no change
Exam Period	12 days	10 days
Study Day	Thu, Apr 12	Sat & Sun, Apr 14-15

RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL:

Be it resolved that, on the recommendation of the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning), the revised Academic Calendar of Dates for 2011-2012 (attached) be approved.

PRIOR CONSULTATION:

Enrolment and Student Affairs Advisory Committee (ESAAC)
Committee on Enrolment and Student Affairs (CESA)
Student association representatives

NEXT STEPS:

Dissemination via the McGill website and other internal methods.
A further proposal, prepared by the Academic Calendar of Dates Working Group to address broader changes to the Academic Calendar of Dates in the future, will be considered by CESA. A proposed Academic Calendar of Dates for 2012-13 will be presented to Senate in April 2011.

APPENDICES:

Proposed Changes to the Calendar of Dates for 2011-2012

Proposed Changes to the 2011-2012 Academic Calendar of Dates

Approved by the Committee on Enrolment and Student Affairs

March 2011

Preamble

Senate approved the 2011-12 Academic Calendar of Dates on April 28, 2010, including a winter term class start date of Tuesday, January 3, 2012. Subsequent to that approval, the University has received many expressions of concern from international students and their families regarding the implications of an 11-day December break. Namely, travelling home to international destinations for a reasonable period of time is limited by both distance and cost due to the relatively short break. Some instructors have expressed frustration about the relatively short timeframe for grading over the holiday period.

International students comprise almost 20% of the McGill student population. As a university with such an international profile, it is important for McGill to adopt an academic calendar that addresses the concerns that have been raised. A further proposal will be presented to Senate in spring 2011 to address broader changes to the Academic Calendar of Dates for 2012-13 and beyond.

Proposal

It is proposed that McGill University lengthen the December break in the 2011-12 academic year by delaying the start of winter term classes to Monday, January 9, 2012. The change will necessitate further revisions to the 2011-12 Academic Calendar of Dates as follows:

Term	Start of classes	End of classes	Study Day	Start of Exams	End of Exams	Notes	
Fall	Thurs, Sept 1	Tues, Dec 6 (extra day in term)	Wed, Dec 7	Thurs, Dec 8	Thurs, Dec 22	11 day exam period (evening exams on 8 days); Tues, Dec 6, is a Monday (for potential election day and use for Monday classes regardless)	
Winter	Tue, Jan 3 (only MDCM, P&OT)	Mon, Jan 9 (all programs except MDCM, P&OT)	Mon, Apr 16	Sat & Sun, Apr 14-15	Tues, April 17	Mon, Apr 30	10 day exam period (evening exams on 8 days); Mon, April 16, is used for Monday make-up classes

Fall 2011:

- The proposed calendar includes an extra day in Fall 2011, on Tuesday, Dec 6, 2011, which will mitigate the effect of a possible election in the fall 2011 semester. The day will be scheduled as a Monday.
- Final examinations will begin on December 8 and end December 22, which provides an 11-day examination period (normal length: 12 days).
- Evening examinations will be held Monday-Thursday throughout the examination period.

Winter 2012:

- Most classes will begin on Monday, January 9, 2012, which will provide at least a 17-day break for most students, beginning on December 23, 2011.
- Classes for some programs will begin on Tuesday, January 3, in cases where clinical or field placement requirements necessitate it in 2012.
- Exam study day(s) in winter term will occur on the weekend, prior to the last day of classes, on April 14 and 15.
- The final examination period will begin April 17 and end April 30, which provides a 10-day examination period.
- Evening examinations will be held Monday-Thursday throughout the examination period.

Consultation with students:

Undergraduate and graduate students were invited to respond to a survey developed by SSMU in collaboration with the administration regarding changes to the Academic Calendar of Dates. The findings of the survey, which attracted 2170 respondents, indicated that 79% agree or somewhat agree that the Academic Calendar of Dates should change. Both graduate and undergraduate respondents indicated that their top priority was a longer December break, with 59% of undergraduates reporting being *very much in favour* and 23% *somewhat in favour* of this priority.

The results did not indicate an overwhelmingly preferred trade-off. However, the most preferred and least undesirable choice was to hold evening examinations (Monday to Thursday) in addition to those in the mornings and afternoons. Undergraduates and graduate students expressed a preference for this, with 45% and 57% indicating they were respectively *somewhat* or *very much in favour* of this. Other options presented for consultation included starting classes in the last week of August, ending classes in the first week of May, and holding examinations on either Saturdays or on Sundays. Students reported these trade-offs to be less appealing.