

## MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Senate	DATE	November 14, 2019
FROM	Peter Tingling Chair, Senate Calendar Committee		
RE:	Academic Dates 2021-2024 and Revisions to Academic Dates 2020/2021		

At its meeting of November 14, 2019, the Calendar Committee reviewed, for approval by Senate, the schedule of dates for future semesters commencing Fall 2021 and finishing Summer 2024, and revisions for the 2020/2021 academic year.

The committee was asked to look at revising the previously approved schedule for 2020/2021 to move Welcome Day/Orientation for the Fall term to the first day following Labour Day, for a two year pilot period.

SFU has a three term in-take system, which challenges the university when it comes to orienting new students at the beginning of each term, as well as evaluating student's academic standing and graduation eligibility at the end of each term. In order to provide students with the best academic and university experience, the following principles are used in determining the optimal academic calendar of dates:

### *Principles*

1. Each semester has 63 teaching days. (Senate paper 03-56)
2. Exams may be scheduled on Sunday if required. (Senate paper 05-127)
3. Exams should be avoided on the Saturday and Sunday of the Easter weekend. (Senate paper 14-102a)
4. There is a week long reading break in February of each year to correspond with the family day holiday. (Senate paper 08-70)
5. All instructors submit grades on-line by the deadline date to allow for quicker end-of-term evaluations.
6. Orientation for new students is a vital component for student retention, development and creating a positive university experience.

### **MOTIONS:**

**Motion 1.** "That Senate approve the revised schedule of academic dates for the Fall 2020, moving Welcome Day/Orientation for the Fall term to the first day following Labour Day, for a two year pilot period."

**Motion 2. “That Senate approve the proposed schedule of academic dates from the Fall 2021 term to Summer 2024 term.”**



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## MEMORANDUM

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**ATTENTION** Calendar Committee **DATE** November 4, 2019  
**FROM** Rummana Khan Hemani, Vice-Provost, Students and International **PAGES**  
**RE:** Welcome Day/Orientation Date Change Proposal, beginning Fall 2020

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### Motion:

Approve and recommend to Senate moving the date of Welcome Day for the Fall term from prior to the start of the term to the first day of the term, beginning Fall 2020, for a two-year pilot period.

### Overview and Background

As a bookend to convocation, orientation (or invocation) plays a critical role in building a new student's commitment to, and sense of belonging at, SFU. Current practice at SFU is to host Welcome Day, the largest orientation event, before the start of each term. While it is important to deliver some orientation activities before the beginning of the term, for the Fall term, having Welcome Day before the start of the term poses a number of issues. The timing of this event, just prior to the Labour Day long weekend, detaches our welcome messaging from the academic experience and limits the number of students, staff, and faculty that are available to participate. New students are welcomed to an empty campus at a time when most faculty and few continuing students have yet returned from their summer breaks, making it difficult to recruit them to participate in these events. This timing also eliminates the possibility of concurrently delivering welcome back programming for the returning student community, thus losing the opportunity to deliberately intermingle these groups. This actively works against creating a shared sense of community on our campuses, something that years of survey data have consistently shown that students require and desire.

Research shows that purposeful, institution-wide commitment to transitioning and welcoming students, particularly with the involvement of academic units, correlates to increased retention, improved student experience and a higher commitment to the institution. With a renewed focus on Student Experience identified in SFU's Academic Plan and through the Student Experience Initiative, SFU has an opportunity and incentive to transform its approach to welcoming and transitioning students. A critical step in this process is to move our large-scale Fall Term welcome event, Welcome Day, to the first day of the term, starting in Fall 2020 (September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020). This shift would set the stage for campus-wide engagement in celebrating the start of new students' SFU journey and generating a sense of community for all students, staff and faculty. It would also improve our ability to showcase SFU's institutional vision and values and connect students to their academic program. After two years, the impacts of the date change would be assessed and reviewed.

### Objectives

Most other Canadian institutions, e.g. UBC, UVIC, York, U of Calgary, Western, etc., have reserved the first day of the term for new student welcome and other orientation events. UBC made this move ten years ago to accommodate their successful "Imagine UBC" invocation event. Shifting welcome day to

the first day of the term at SFU would:

- Create a formal university welcome event that demonstrates our commitment to the first-year experience
- Create an opportunity for the pan-campus university community to participate in invocation activities at Burnaby. Additional campus-specific orientation programming would supplement these activities.
- Make Welcome Day more inclusive by removing some of the barriers to participation
- Increase new student participation, both domestic and international
- Provide an opportunity for concurrent welcome back programming for returning students to foster a shared sense of community across the full student cohort.
- Increase the number of faculty, staff and existing students participating in welcome activities
- Make it easier for Residence and Housing to arrange new-student move in and residence orientation
- Potentially improve student satisfaction and first year retention. (Current survey data indicates students who participate in Welcome Day have both higher senses of community as well as better first-year retention rates)
- Present greater opportunities for Faculties to implement initiatives that help establish academic standards (e.g. first lectures or other classroom-based activities)
- Contribute to building a shared SFU community identity

**Decision:**

According to best practices in new student orientation programming, this proposal recommends that the first day of each Fall term, for a two-year pilot starting Fall 2020, be designated for welcome, invocation and welcome back programming.

**Proposed Dates:**

Fall 2020

Original Welcome Day date: September 3, 2020

Revised date: September 8, 2020

Fall 2021

Proposed Welcome Day date: September 7, 2021

Moving this event to the first day of classes would formally recognize the importance of welcome and transition activities for the entire institution. The approval of this proposal would serve as an impetus for launching campus-wide discussion and consultation to collaboratively create a shared vision and outcomes for Welcome Day 2020, and beyond. After two years, the date change and programming would be assessed against objectives, and the decision would be reviewed.

**Additional Points for Consideration:**

- A delay in the first day of classes by one day, i.e. from Tuesday to Wednesday, will not result in a reduction in instructional days as an additional Tuesday will be added to the end of the current Fall term schedule of classes. In years where Labour Day falls on September 6 or 7, the additional instructional day would mean the elimination of the one-day break between the last day of classes and the first day of exams. However, exams would be scheduled to ensure that students with classes on Tuesdays would not have any final exams until Thursday, in essence giving them a one-day break.
- The proposal has received the support of the Deans' and the VPs'.
- With the approval by Senate of the amendments to the Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 academic calendars to reflect the above changes, a working group of appropriate stakeholders from across the University Community will be established to design and implement enhanced Welcome Day programming.

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- Welcome Day (Fall 2020 moved from September 2-3, 2019)
- First day of class
- Last day of class
- Exam period
- Holiday
- Reading Break
- Convocation

<i>Principles</i>	Senate Reference
1. Each semester has 63 teaching days. (Senate paper 03-56)	<a href="#">S.03-56</a>
2. Exams may be scheduled on Sunday if required. (Senate paper 05-127)	<a href="#">S.05-127</a>
3. Exams should be avoided on the Saturday and Sunday of the Easter weekend. (Senate paper 14-102a)	<a href="#">S.14-102a</a>
4. There is a week long reading break in February of each year to correspond with the family day holiday. (Senate paper 08-70)	<a href="#">S.08-70</a>
5. All instructors submit grades on-line by the deadline date to allow for quicker end-of-term evaluations.	
6. Orientation for new students is a vital component for student retention, development and creating a positive university experience.	* Proposed change for Fall 2020 - 2-year pilot

2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
FALL 2021 (1217)	FALL 2022 (1227)	FALL 2023 (1237)
6 September Labour Day	5 September Labour Day	4 September Labour Day
7 September Welcome Day*	6 September Welcome Day*	5 September Welcome Day*
8 September Classes start	7 September Classes start	6 September Classes start
7-8 October Convocation	6-7 October Convocation	5-6 October Convocation
11 October Thanksgiving	10 October Thanksgiving	9 October Thanksgiving
11 November Remembrance Day	11 November Remembrance Day	13 November Remembrance Day
7 December Last day of classes	6 December Last day of classes*	5 December Last day of classes*
8 – 20 December Exams	7-19 December Exams*	6 – 18 December Exams*
SPRING 2022 (1221)	SPRING 2023 (1231)	SPRING 2024 (1241)
3 January New Year's Day	2 January New Year's Day	1 January New Year's Day
4 January Welcome Day	3 January Welcome Day	2 January Welcome Day
5 January Classes start	4 January Classes start	3 January Classes start
21 February Family Day	20 February Family Day	19 February Family Day
22-27 February Reading Break	21 – 26 February Reading Break	20 – 25 February Reading Break
8 April Last day of classes	7 – 10 April Easter weekend	29 March-1 April Easter weekend
15-18 April Easter weekend	11 April Last day of classes	9 April Last day of classes
11– 25 April Exams	13 – 24 April Exams	11 – 22 April Exams
SUMMER 2022 (1224)	SUMMER 2023 (1234)	SUMMER 2024 (1244)
6 May Welcome Day	5 May Welcome Day	3 May Welcome Day
9 May Classes start	8 May Classes start	6 May Classes start
23 May Victoria Day	22 May Victoria Day	20 May Victoria Day
7-10 June Convocation	6-9 June Convocation	11-14 June Convocation
1 July Canada Day	3 July Canada Day	1 July Canada Day
1 August BC Day	4 August Last day of classes	2 August Last day of classes
8 August Last day of classes	7 August BC Day	5 August BC Day
10 – 20 August Exams	8 – 18 August Exams	6 – 16 August Exams
*pilot	* tentative	* tentative

# 2021

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- Welcome Day
- First day of class
- Last day of class
- Exam period
- Holiday
- Reading Break
- Convocation



# 2022

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- Welcome Day
- First day of class
- Last day of class
- Exam period
- Holiday
- Reading Break
- Convocation

# 2023

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- Welcome Day
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- Last day of class
- Exam period
- Holiday
- Reading Break
- Convocation

# 2024

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