

30 November 2020

Dear members of the Brock community,

Let me begin by thanking you all for your hard work over the course of the last eight months. From the moment Brock University began moving its academic operations online on March 13, you have all demonstrated your resilience and your ability to adapt to these unprecedented circumstances.

For faculty members and librarians, this has meant learning how to connect with students and conduct research and other creative activities in a whole new way, one which feels new and foreign to many of us. I commend each of you on your efforts in support of our students.

For staff, this has sometimes meant becoming accustomed to working from home, where the line between family life and professional life becomes blurred and balancing the two can feel like an even greater challenge than usual. For others, it has meant getting up every morning and driving into a campus that feels largely deserted in service of a student body that seems largely invisible. I thank you for your contributions in support of the entire University community.

For students, this has meant learning to learn, teach or conduct research online despite the added pressures of the pandemic on your finances, your personal lives, and your mental health. The pandemic has also had significant effects on the academic progress of some of our graduate students. Your resilience and commitment to advancing your academic and professional goals have been inspiring.

In all cases, your dedication to the pursuit of knowledge has been remarkable. However, in many cases, month upon month in this new normal has taken its toll.

For this reason, we have engaged with the University community, consulting with students, staff and faculty members over the last two weeks about the possibility of extending the holiday break for students. While we heard arguments on both sides of this debate, the majority voice was in favour of such an extension.

As such, Brock has decided to extend its holiday break. Instead of opening on January 4, the University will re-open on Wednesday, January 6. Classes for the Winter term will resume on January 11.

This change means that most faculty members and staff will receive two additional days off on January 4 and 5 to rest and recharge. Those staff whose role requires them to be on campus on those days will be provided with two flex days instead, which can be used prior to April 30.

The extension of the holiday break will require a few minor changes to the academic calendar. The Winter term will now end on April 9. Exams will take place from April 13 to 23. The exam period for the Winter term will be shortened by two days, but every effort will be made to avoid undue burden on students. The Spring/Summer term will start as scheduled and the dates for Reading Week will also remain the same.

To ensure the academic progress of all students, there will be some exceptions to this delay. For example, graduate thesis defenses scheduled for the week of January 4 will proceed as planned, subject to confirmation from the Faculty of Graduate Studies. **Other exceptions will be communicated to affected students by their home Faculties.**

We have heard from many students, staff and faculty members that this extension will provide valuable time to rest and, in many cases, to catch up and better prepare for the Winter term. For those who are traveling or who are coming to Brock from abroad, this extra time will facilitate the completion of the mandatory self-isolation period.

I hope that all members of the Brock community will find time over the holiday break to take care of themselves, to reconnect safely with friends and family, and to come back refreshed for the term ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Wells', written in a cursive style.

Professor Lynn Wells, PhD
Provost & Vice-President, Academic

FAQ about the delayed start

Q: How will key dates for the Winter term be affected?

A: In the coming weeks, Brock's ['Important Dates'](#) webpage will be updated to reflect the delayed start. Until then, the following dates are updated below:

- The University will re-open after the holiday break on Wednesday, January 6.
- Classes will resume on Monday, January 11.
- Reading Week will continue to run as planned from February 16-19.
- The Winter term will now end on April 9.
- The exam period for the Winter term will be shortened by two days, running from April 13 to April 23.
- Dates for withdrawal without academic penalty remain the same.
- Financial deadlines, including deadlines for tuition and other payments, remain unchanged.
- To ensure the academic progress of all students, there will be some exceptions to the delayed start. These will be communicated to affected students by their home Faculties.

Q: What academic activities will be exempt from the delayed start?

A:

- Classes scheduled to start on Saturday, January 9, will maintain this start date.
- Teacher Education practicum courses will begin on January 4.
- Placements, practica, and other experiential components already planned to begin the week of January 4 will go forward as scheduled.
- Graduate student thesis defenses already planned for the week of January 4 will go forward as scheduled, subject to confirmation from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Q: Will residences remain open during the week of January 4?

A: Yes, residences will remain open and students are welcome to return according to their usual schedule.

- Students can return or move into residence any time after noon on Sunday, January 3. Students moving into residence are asked to schedule move-in slots according to the usual procedure.
- The dining hall will be open regular hours for the week of January 4, with additional hours on January 3 for students who are moving in.

Q: I am a staff member. How will I know if I have to come to work on January 4 and 5?

A: This information will be communicated to managers by Human Resources. The overwhelming majority of staff will receive the additional days off on January 4 and 5. Only those staff designated by HR will receive flex days in lieu.