

# Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee Report

Chair: Bryan Buraga

Secretary: Léa Allonier



Presented to Legislative Council 2019-03-14



**Office of the Chair | Bureau du Président**

Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee | Comité spécial sur le congé de lecture d'automne

Tel: (514) 398-6801 | Fax: (514) 398-7490 | artsscisenator@ssmu.ca

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*Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories*

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# Committee Terms of Reference

## 1. AD-HOC FALL READING BREAK COMMITTEE

**1.1 OVERSIGHT.** The Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee shall be a Committee of the Legislative Council.

**1.2 GENERAL.** The Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee shall gather student input and engage with various members of the McGill community in order to bring about the successful implementation of a Fall Reading Break.

**1.3 RESPONSIBILITIES.** The Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee shall:

- (a) review and evaluate past actions undertaken by the SSMU to bring about a Fall Reading Break;
- (b) investigate and find solutions to the scheduling conflicts arising from the introduction of a Fall Reading Break;
- (c) conduct consultations with the student body to determine what students are looking for in a Fall Reading Break and what they are willing to compromise for it;
- (d) propose a Fall Reading Break structure that would best benefit students;
- (e) submit a report to the Legislative Council by March 14, 2019 detailing the actions taken in the course of business of this committee, complete with a list of recommendations in order to bring about the implementation of a Fall Reading Break;
- (f) present this report to the SSMU membership as a referendum question in the 2019 Winter Referendum period for acceptance or rejection.

**1.4 MEMBERSHIP.** The Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee shall consist of:

- (a) the President [Advisory, voting];
- (b) the Vice-President (University Affairs) [Advisory, voting];
- (c) Representatives:
  - (i) Senate Caucus Representative (1)
  - (ii) Arts (1)
  - (iii) Arts & Science (1)
  - (iv) Dentistry (1)
  - (v) Education (1)
  - (vi) Engineering (1)
  - (vii) First Year Council (1)
  - (viii) Inter-Residence Council (1)
  - (ix) Law (1)
  - (x) Management (1)
  - (xi) Medicine (1)



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- (xii) Music (1)
  - (xiii) Nursing (1)
  - (xiv) PT/OT (1)
  - (xv) Science (1)
  - (xvi) Social Work (1)
- (d) Members-at-Large.

**1.5 MEETINGS.** The Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee shall meet every 2 weeks, unless an additional meeting is approved by a simple majority of the Members. Committee Members will be provided a tentative schedule at the second meeting.

**1.6 QUORUM.** Quorum for the Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee shall be a simple majority of members.

**1.7 REPORTING.** The Committee shall submit its final report to the Legislative Council by the March 14, 2019 meeting.

**1.8 COMMITTEE SPECIFIC.**

**1.8.1 CHAIR.** The Committee Chair shall be selected by an internal vote of the Committee.

**1.8.2. SECRETARY.** The Committee Secretary shall be selected by an internal vote of the Committee. The Committee Secretary must take detailed meeting minutes at each meeting of the Committee.

**1.8.2 MEMBERS-AT-LARGE.** The Committee Chair, in consultation with the other Members of the Committee, shall have the power to appoint Members-at-Large of the Committee.

**1.8.3 DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS.** The following is the criteria for the dismissal of Members:

- a) It is up to the Chair's discretion to dismiss a Member if a Member misses two or more meetings unexcused or without valid medical or emergency notice.
- b) It is up to the Chair's discretion to place Members first on probation and dismiss Members if their behavior warrants removal from the Committee.
- c) A  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority vote of Members can empower the Committee to exercise the same powers as the Chair with regards to probation or dismissal of Members.
- d) The Legislative Council will be notified at the next Legislative Council meeting of the removal of Members from the Committee and will recommend a replacement.
- e) A Councillor that is removed from the Committee should first be replaced by another Councillor of the same constituency, then by a Member-at-Large of the same constituency.

**1.8.4 VOTING RIGHTS.** Each Member of the Committee shall have one vote each. In the event that a Member is unable to attend a meeting, they may send a proxy to vote on their behalf. All voting shall be conducted by simple majority unless decided otherwise by a consensus of the Members.



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## Membership

Bryan Buraga	Chair
Léa Allonier	Secretary
Tre Mansdoerfer	Member
Jacob Shapiro	Member
Sarim Malik	Member
Lauren Jelinek	Member
Brandon Hersh	Member
Maude Martin	Member
Abtin Ameri	Member
Umema Rajput	Member
Mark Walsh	Member
Patrick Snyder	Member
Alexander YQ Yang	Member
Owen Quinn	Member
Clemence Granade	Member
Cameron Piccone	Member
Bryan Jay	Member
Ulrike Wachter	Member
Nathan Mendel	Member
Kerry Yang	Member
Maxine Steuer	Member
Bryan Danielson	Member
Nadiem Ahmed	Member
Zara Ali	Member



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## Foreword

The lack of a Fall Reading Break at McGill University has been an elusive issue for students for many years. The work that we have been able to achieve this year has built on the work of past students. Without their previous advocacy, negotiations, and work on this topic, we would not have been able to get to where we are today.

In particular, I would like to thank my committee members for their hard work on this issue, Léa Allonier for her detailed and well-written meeting minutes, Alexander Dow for his guidance and past work on a Fall Reading Break, Fabrice Labeau for his willingness to explore the possibilities for making a Fall Reading Break happen, JED Consulting on their data analysis and focus group work, and Tre Mansdoerfer and Jacob Shapiro for their advice and direction throughout this past year.

This report represents the culmination of many months of work done by this committee. It outlines the past work that has been done on this file, the work that the Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee has done over the past year, and specific recommendations as to how to best usher in a Fall Reading Break at McGill University. In all this work, I hope that we will finally be able to attain a Fall Reading Break for the years to come.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'B Buraga'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bryan Buraga

Chair, Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee



## Committee Work

After the successful Winter 2018 SSMU Referendum question where 96.6% of undergraduate students voted in favour of a Fall Reading Break, the Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee was struck in September 2018 to continue the work of advocating for a Fall Reading Break. The Committee met six times over the course of the past year to tackle the issues around a Fall Reading Break, including faculty-specific concerns such as contact hours for professional programs and stages, and to advocate for a Fall Reading Break. The Committee also discussed Fall Reading Breaks at other universities in Quebec and in Canada. Meeting minutes for the Committee are available in the appendix.

The Committee pursued two forms of student outreach to get data from students on a Fall Reading Break: a survey and focus groups. The survey was disseminated late in the Fall semester using social media, listservs, and word-of-mouth to ensure a large sample size. The survey was closed with over 4,300 responses. JED Consulting was retained in December 2018 to aid the Committee in analyzing the results of the survey and to conduct the focus groups. The results and corresponding analysis of these are available in the JED Consulting Fall Reading Break report.

Bryan Buraga and Tre Mansdoerfer pursued talks within McGill committees and stakeholders to advocate for a Fall Reading Break. In the McGill Senate Committee, the Enrolment and Student Affairs Advisory Committee (ESAAC), it was decided that a subcommittee be formed to look into the issues surrounding a Fall Reading Break. The composition of this committee included representatives from McGill Enrollment Services, administrative support staff of the Faculties of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, the SSMU, and the Macdonald Campus Students' Society (MCSS). Buraga and Mansdoerfer represented the SSMU in this committee.

The aforementioned committee coalesced around two solutions toward making a Fall Reading Break happen: adding time to classes to maintain contact hours, and starting the Fall semester earlier. Bringing this information to the Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee, we weighed the pros and cons of both options and came to the conclusion that starting the Fall semester earlier would be the best option for students. This option would also allow the Fall exam period to be extended, alleviating stress and reducing the possibility for students that final exams would happen close together.

After the Committee's work had concluded, the following recommendations were adopted:



## Recommendations

1. That the SSMU continue advocating for a Fall Reading Break
2. That the SSMU advocate for a one week Fall Reading Break
3. That a Fall Reading Break should occur the week of Canadian Thanksgiving
4. That the Fall semester begin the week prior to Labour Day (in late August) in order to accomodate a Fall Reading Break



## Appendix - Meeting Minutes

November 2, 2018

1. Call to Order: 5:20;
2. Adoption of the Agenda;

The committee approved the agenda.

3. Election of the Chair;

The committee members present elected Bryan Buraga Chair unanimously.

4. Election of the Secretary;

The committee members present elected Léa Allonier Secretary.

5. Actionables for Meeting;
6. Discussions

- a. Membership

The committee discussed setting a regular meeting time and recommended avoiding Friday meetings given the high number of engagements members have on that day. It was agreed that the committee should meet every two weeks at least. However, it has been decided to wait for membership to increase before setting a regular meeting time. Next meeting time and date will be decided through When2meet, Bryan Buraga is to create the poll and announce the meeting date during the week.

- b. Short term plan

The first steps for the committee will be to survey student body, research and review previous Fall reading break request attempts and propose solutions.

Points of attention raised regarding the survey:

- i. Survey -- basic information on student year/faculty

Survey should include basic demographic information on the student body: year, faculty, program, Québec/International/Canadian etc.

- ii. Where students would be ok with adding days/time (concessions)

The committee discussed different options regarding how to compensate for the time spent on a fall reading break. Potential solutions include:

- Starting classes in September before Labour Day.
- Starting classes at the end of August.
- Adding exams on the Saturday of the exam period
- Changing class period duration by adding minutes. The committee will explore the possibility of making class period 3 minutes longer, or 55 minutes long instead of 50 minutes as it is presently. No serious discussion has been made with the administration on this topic, the committee members agreed that there is potential for this idea recently brought up by a student to be a solution to our restricted time frame.

- iii. What outcomes come from a Reading Break



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The committee members quickly reviewed the benefits of a fall reading break on student mental health. It is agreed that it will give students time to rest, study and destress. The committee relied on the previous reports by the 2015 committee and the

iv. 12 month vs 8 month leases

Reviewing previous oppositions made by the administration to a Fall Reading Break, it came to our attention that McGill administration worried about student leases having to start earlier if the school year was to start before labour day. The survey would therefore need to include a question that would allow us to know if leases would be a problem for students, asking them for instance whether they have 8 or 12 months leases would allow the committee to know if starting classes before Labour day is problematic.

v. Would you be ok in Aug

The survey should also include a question asking students about their opinions on starting classes in late August.

vi. Weekend exams

The survey should include a question asking students about their opinions regarding taking exams on the Saturday during exam period.

vii. Hours vs days? (Necessary for accreditation)

Reviewing previous problem encountered by Fall Reading Break committees, members discussed the problem of accreditation faced by some programs within McGill (Faculty of Engineering, certain programs in the Faculty of Sciences or the faculty of Medicine). The committee members agreed to research on how the accreditation works, whether the accreditation depends on the number of days or on the number of hours of teaching. If it is the latter, we can explore the possibility to lengthen class periods, add periods later in the day or start classes at 8 instead of 8:30.

viii. January

The committee also discussed the possibility of changing the Winter Break to accommodate for a Fall Reading Break. However, the committee agreed this might be difficult to implement with regard to Québec legislation.

1. Focus groups for faculties, get an in depth perspective on what people want -- similar to Brock/Guelph

The committee would like to expand its research and data collection and get an in depth perspective of what the different student bodies are concerned with, and how to best implement a Fall Reading Break for each faculty.

ix. Legislative council

The long term objectives of this committee is to write vote a report regarding the implementation of a Fall Reading Break at McGill and to submit the committee's proposal to the Legislative Council in February

1. Referendum set in March

If the committee succeeds in those steps, its proposal would be part of the spring referendum in March.

- x. Members look at other universities that do have it implemented, how they did it, etc



In order to accumulate more research on other universities' Fall Reading Break, committee members have agreed to research on different universities, listed below. The purpose is to get a more complete understanding of how Fall Breaks are implemented at other universities, how they came to be and what are the detailed policies (opt in/ opt out for med for instance). Members will also focus on faculty of engineering, sciences and other professional faculties.

1. UdeM, Laval, HEC, U of T, Brock, UQAM

- c. Surveying

The committee has agreed to include a few open questions at the end of the survey.

- i. Short anecdotes (“Why would you want a fall reading week”)

First open question is asked with the goal to collect anecdotes from the student body on a Fall Reading Break in order to reinforce our argument and provide examples in our report of why a Fall Reading Break would benefit students' mental health and well being.

- ii. Alternative solution (“What ideas would you have for making this happen?”)

The committee also wishes to include an open question which would call for suggestions from the student body on how to accommodate time for the Fall Reading Break.

- iii. Feedback from OSLL

The committee intends to consult OSLL to get more in depth feedback on the impacts of a Fall reading Break on McGill student population.

- iv. Communication

The committee discussed the different ways to increase the number of respondents. The first thing agreed was to use the respective constituencies of the members of the committee. Members present also agreed to use the EUS wiki listservs.

[https://wiki.mcgilleus.ca/List\\_of\\_Listservs](https://wiki.mcgilleus.ca/List_of_Listservs) -- Listservs

- v. Forms

Bryan Buraga volunteered to draft the survey before next meeting using one of the following. The provisional survey will be reviewed next meeting.

1. Survey Monkey -- SSMU
      2. Google form

7. Actionables from Meeting:

- a. Bryan -- Setting up the when2meet, drafting the survey
  - b. Tre -- inquiring about potential prizes/money to incentify survey
  - c. Tre + Bryan -- getting feedback from OSLL

In order to accumulate more research on other universities' Fall Reading Break, committee members have agreed to research on different universities, listed below. The purpose is to get a more complete understanding of how Fall Breaks are implemented at other universities, how they came to be and what are the detailed policies (opt in/ opt out for med for instance). Members will also focus on faculty of engineering, sciences and other professional faculties.

- d. Abtin - U of T
  - e. Sarim - Brock
  - f. Patrick - Laval
  - g. Lea -- UdeM



- h. Bryan -- HEC, UQAM
8. Adjournment 5:53 PM

## November 11, 2018

1. Call to Order: 5:02
2. Adoption of the Agenda;

The committee members adopted the agenda.

3. Actionables from previous meeting:

The committee members quickly presented the research they made on other universities as agreed during the previous meeting on November, 2 2018.

- a. Bryan -- when2meet, survey

Bryan Buraga has created the when2meet survey and set the date for this meeting during this week. He has also drafted the survey, the committee agreed to review it later during the meeting.

- b. Tre -- prizes/money for survey

- i. Incentivising the survey won't be possible.

Tre Mansdoerfer enquired about the possibility to have the survey financially incentivised using SSMU fund. This will not be possible.

He also contacted other presidents of student unions across Canadian universities through Facebook and received detailed feedback from McMaster University Students Union. The e-mail can be found in the Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee Google Drive. It details very well how McMaster University researched on a reading break and the concessions that were made to accommodate for this Fall Reading break, here to start classes a week earlier in August and to remove one study day between the end of classes and exams in both terms. The student body was also surveyed and the overwhelming 'yes' answer resulted in the approval of a pilot year.

The committee members stressed the importance of having a couple of pilot years at McGill when implementing the Fall Reading Break. Feedback from other universities included a list of factors to evaluate :

- Instructional days/time
- Grading deadlines
- Exam schedules
- Course registrations
- Instructor pay

The committee will pay particular attention to those different factors when evaluating the options existing for a Fall Reading Break at McGill University.

- c. Tre + Bryan -- Feedback from OSLL

- i. DPSLL Meeting

Tre Mansdoerfer discussed with Fabrice Labeau, Deputy Provost to student life and learning who recommended the committee launches the survey as quickly as possible rather than in 3/4 weeks as decided before. Tre will write a follow up email.

- ii. ESAAC Sub-committee



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d. Abtin - U of T

The University of Toronto has a reading week for all faculties except engineering between the 5 and 9 November. Engineers do not have a Fall Reading Break. The academic schedules follows McGill's one with classes starting after labour day and exams ending on December 21st. They also have exams in the evening.

e. Sarim - Brock

As Sarim Malik was absent, Bryan Buraga reported for him. The document with his research is available on the Ad-Hoc Fall Reading Break Committee drive. Brock University has a full week Fall Break between October 9 and October 12 this year, right after Thanksgiving week-end. They adopted this schedule in 2012 for a three-year pilot project. After its impact was reviewed, they adopted a Fall Reading week. No visible changes were made on the academic schedule, exam date and end-of-semester date stayed the same. The only concession which was made was that the semester now starts a day earlier.

f. Patrick - Laval, Dalhousie, School of Nursing

- i. University of Laval has a Fall reading Break since a long time, there is little information on how it came to exist. The semesters start a little bit earlier, a day before Labour day (September 2nd this year). Courses are suspended during this break but internships do continue or specific arrangements are made for the faculties concerned.
- ii. Dalhousie University
- iii. School of Nursing

Patrick Snyder took the initiative to contact the director of the School of Nursing. He inquired about the accreditation requirements for McGill University. Canada does not have a required number of hours but McGill Universities set the minima to 1450 hours of critical clinical teaching on stage. The directors of the School of Nursing estimated that 49 hours would be lost during a full week break. They also raised three specific concerns regarding nursing students:

- Stages start early in October, the School of Nursing fears that losing a week at that time would be detrimental to first year students getting used to McGill's academic schedule.
- The School of Nursing also raised to the committee's attention that clinical placement for second year students are competitive with other school in the area. They fear the changes in schedule would decrease McGill's competitiveness.
- Lastly, they raised concerns about professors schedule and salaries. The committee has agreed to ask for more elaboration on that topic. Patrick will follow up with the school of Nursing.

g. Lea -- UdeM

- i. UdeM

All faculties at UdeM have a full reading week between October 22nd and October 26th this year. The general schedule is similar to McGill's.

All Faculties at UdeM have a reading week between

- ii. Polytechnique Montréal



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Engineering students at Polytechnique Montréal also have a Fall reading week but follow a different academic schedule. Classes start earlier, at the of August and exams end the same day as McGill's.

h. Bryan -- HEC, UQAM

i. UQAM

UQAM doesn't have a fall reading break for any faculty.

ii. HEC

HEC students do have a fall reading break between October 25 and October 31. However classes start at the end of August, on August 25th, and exam period finishes at the same time as McGill's.

4. Discussions:

i. Survey trial;

The committee members all took the survey to have a precise idea of how long it takes and be more familiar with the questions and the problems students might encounter while answering. The committee found out that the survey does not take more than 5 minutes to complete.

j. Survey finalization;

The committee members reviewed the survey prepared by Bryan Buraga, going through each question and bringing modifications.

- Committee member Maude Martin enquired about the purpose of the question about commuting students. Committee decided to keep the question but not to make it a mandatory questions as students might not understand what is meant by 'commuter'.
- The question 'Which faculty are you in?' has to be changed to a question with a selected number of answer in order to simplify the data collection.
- The question regarding the lease does not serve the purpose the committee wanted. The question is to be changed to something more specific that will allow the committee members to see how many students would have a lease problem if classes where to start earlier in September or August. The survey will therefore have an additional conditional question for students who answered '8 months' to the question to see whether their leases start in Septembre or earlier. The committee members also decided to add 'McGill residences as an answer as the leases are specific to McGill, follow the term dates, and can be 11 months long.
- For the question 'For a Fall Reading Break, would you be willing to:', the committee agreed to add an option 'I am not ready to sacrifice any of these'. This answer will allow the committee to get a good estimation of how many students are not willing to make any concessions for a Fall Reading Break. The committee also decided to remove the option 'shorten exam period' as it is not a likely solution. We also decided to add 'have longer class period' to the survey.
- The committee debated on whether to include or not 'remove the study day before exam' as it is not a day that exist on the academic calendar every year.
- The committee also decided to change the question 'When would like to have a study break' by removing the 'before/during/after midterm' answer as no student have the same midterm period and the answer would be too subjective. We also decided to add a simple binary choice question to have a better idea of how many students prefer a 5 day break around thanksgiving or a 4-day break at another time. The committee finally agreed that specifying the number of days would make the question clearer for respondents.



- Tre Mansdoerfer raised to the committee attention that there was no name or student ID requested on the survey, mostly to ensure no respondent answers twice. The committee debated the question of anonymity of the survey and agreed that no question called for very personal answers and therefore adding an email address question at the beginning would not be a problem. The committee would have preferred to use McGill ID numbers but as we do not have access to a list of all ID numbers, we made the final decision to use McGill email addresses.
- The committee decided to change the questions with a 1-10 scale to something less subjective like 'agree/disagree/neutral'.
- Finally the committee stressed the importance of having the survey reviewed by McGill administration to ensure no matter of importance was missed and no bias exist in favour of the break in the survey.

Actionables from Meeting:

- k. Bryan -- Survey finalization

Bryan Buraga will be responsible for completing the survey before next meeting with recommendations of the committee given this meeting

- l. Tre + Bryan -- email Fabrice Labeau

Bryan Buraga and Tre Mansdoerfer will follow up with McGill administration.

- m. All -- Faculty limitations with Fall Reading Week

Every committee member is responsible for researching within their faculties what obstacles exist to a Fall Reading Break and what are the concerns of students and administration. For instance, committee members should focus on the accreditation problem in some faculties (nursing, engineering, sciences).

- n. Tre + Bryan -- Members

The committee agrees that membership still needs to increase. Bryan Buraga and Tre Mansdoerfer are responsible for recruiting more members among different McGill faculties as detailed below.

- i. Arts -- Bryan
- ii. Management -- Tre
- iii. Law -- Tre
- iv. Medicine -- Tre
- v. Social Work -- Bryan
- vi. PTOT -- Tre
- vii. Music -- Bryan
- viii. Science -- Bryan

#### 5. Meeting time

The committee members agreed that the meetings should now be hosted regularly every two weeks on sundays, every two weeks, between 4 and 5 o'clock in the SSMU Boardroom. Next meeting will therefore be on November 25th, 2018 between 4pm and 5pm in the SSMU boardroom.

Adjournment: 5:51 PM



## November 25, 2018

1. Call to Order: 4:17 PM
2. Adoption of the Agenda;

The committee adopted the agenda.

3. Actionables from previous meeting:
  - a. Bryan -- Survey finalization

As discussed last meeting, some modifications were brought to the survey those past two weeks. The Office for Student Life and Learning went over the survey and asked for the addition of a “matrix” type question “For a Fall Reading Break, I would be willing to:”.

- b. Tre + Bryan -- email Fabrice Labeau

Tre and Bryan discussed with Fabrice Labeau, SLL Deputy Provost, to get his input on a Fall Reading Break. He stays optimistic on the successful implementation of a Fall Reading Break but would wait for more input from the survey.

- c. All -- Faculty limitations with Fall Reading Week
    - i. Education - Maude

After discussion with the faculty, the main points were both the stages and the mandatory in-class seminars for students on stages. Though the faculty agreed that the best solution is that students on stage stay on stage, there are still some concerns about seminars. Those seminars being mandatory and happening every tuesday and friday - depending on the year -, it might be difficult to have them eliminated for a week. The committee also noted that those seminars have been occasionally cancelled this semester, for “unforeseen circumstances” such as building problems (the education building is in repair).

In winter, stages are accomodated around the winter break: one end just before and another starts right after.

- ii. Music - Mark

In the Faculty of Music, main concerns revolve around the compact schedule of the first few weeks of the term. Students, have to manage auditions at the beginning of septembre as well as classes. Faculty therefore fears that starting earlier or adding a break might make the schedule even more compact for music students.

From a first year perspective, Mark added that with Frosh, discover McGill and other first year added activities, the schedule would be too compact if classes were to start earlier but students could not move in residence earlier (by a week or so).

- iii. Arts and Science - Bryan

In Arts, there seem to be no major obstacles to the implementation of a Fall Reading Break. In Science however, programs accredited by a provincial body (chemistry, biochemistry?) have issues with a Fall Reading Break. Bryan stressed the necessity of having a science representative on the committee as soon as possible.

- iv. IRC - Léa



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Main concerns for McGill housing would be the ones discussed in our first meeting: the implications in terms of staff if students have to move in earlier. Léa is still waiting to hear back from McGill Senior Director of Housing and Dining Services.

The survey can also be sent to students in residence through the res life listserv.

d. Tre + Bryan -- Members

The committee still needs representation from the different student faculties. Tre and Bryan are still working on contacting different representatives.

- i. Arts -- Bryan
- ii. Management -- Tre
- iii. Law -- Tre
- iv. Medicine -- Tre

Because of their different schedule, the faculty of medicine feels like they are not relevant in the discussions on a Fall reading Break. It is important to note that a lot of the respondent of the survey are in medicine, Tre is still in contact with them to have them send a representative to the committee.

v. Social Work -- Bryan

The committee noted that the faculty of Social Work is on strike, hence the difficulty to get a representative from them at the moment.

- vi. PTOT -- Tre
- vii. Music -- Bryan

For the time being, Mark can represent informally the Faculty of Music in those meetings.

viii. Science -- Bryan

4. Discussions:

a. Survey completion;

Every member present at the meeting took the survey, to gauge how much time it might take, try the bit.ly link and notice any potential errors. The committee members also went through the 217 results already available.

The committee notes that the results are, for now, not very representative of the student body. Ideally, the number of respondents should reach at least 5,000.

b. Discussion on focus group goals;

The committee goal for January 2018 is to create focus groups, of about 10 students or more, within the different faculties/constituencies. Bryan will work over winter break on different documents to give members of the committee a framework for those focus groups. The purpose of those focus groups will be to gather qualitative data from the student body.

5. Actionables from Meeting:

a. Sign up for at least one in-class announcement this week;

Bryan put up in the drive a list of the largest undergraduate classes in McGill. Committee members are responsible for signing up to at least one to make an announcement about the survey at the beginning of class. Committee members can also find in the drive if needed a slide with the announcement for professor to project at the beginning of classes.

b. Go back to your faculty councils and allot time to get them to do survey;



Members should encourage their fellow council members to do the survey during their council meetings.

#### 6. Meeting time

The next meeting time will be decided through an online poll that Bryan will send to all committee members during the first week of winter term.

Adjournment: 4:55 PM

## January 26, 2019

1. Call to Order: 4:07 PM
2. Adoption of the Agenda;

The members present adopted the agenda.

3. Actionables from previous meeting -- None:
4. Discussions:

#### a. Update on survey results

The survey had 4339 responses when it was closed. JED Consulting has been hired to analyse the results in detail. As a quick overview, the results are distributed evenly over the different undergraduate years, there is representation from the four big faculties as well as all others. A third of the students from Québec answered but they actually represent 50% of the school population, we therefore have a lot of responses from international and out-of-province students. Respondents mostly have a 12-months lease, only 10 % have an 8-month lease, which was a concern brought up when the committee first met.

In term of preferences, 50% of students would be ready to start in late august and most would be ready to start before labour day within the month of septembre. The option to start classes earlier than 8:30am wasn't very popular among respondents. These options will have to be further discussed with Fabrice Labeau, the deputy vice-provost to student affairs. The option to extend class time by a few minutes still has to be explored. In terms of date, students seem to prefer late october to early november. When it comes to the choice between 5 days around thanksgiving or 4 days somewhere else in the year, the answers are pretty even.

Finally, looking at the committee had no surprises when looking at the qualitative questions integrated at the end of the survey: respondents do believe a fall reading break would allow them to focus on their mental health, physical health or see family and friends

#### b. JED Consulting Overview

JED consulting will join the committee to help us with data collection and analysis, in detail, in the coming month. They are here today to observe and understand the different restrictions we are facing in implementing a fall reading break. They are also here to envision the focus groups which will be organised soon. They will finally look at the different option in detail and assist in drafting what the calendar might look like with the different options. They might use as support the documentation we received from other universities who previously worked on the implementation of a fall reading break.

#### c. Focus Groups Overview



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The focus group should be led by JED consulting and should start early february. The main idea is to organise them in a roundtable fashion, and have students of different ages answer a set of questions - focusing mainly on undergraduate students but without forgetting to interview some graduate and PhD students. For JED consulting, the idea would be to have groups representative from every faculty, with a couple more groups in large faculties like Arts or Sciences. This would represent about 20 groups across the university. This would ideally be concluded by mid/late february. The recruitment of students for different groups will be made with the assistance of the different representatives from each faculty within this committee. JED analysis also highlighted the importance of interviewing professors and/or TA as their opinion can be valuable.

Last points of focus for JED consulting and the committee members would be engaging discussion with McGill services, to get an idea of how they would adjust their schedule if there is a change in the school calendar, same thing goes for McGill housing. The committee could also contact McGill Association of University Teachers (MAUT).

d. McGill Senate Subcommittee Meeting

-> introductory meeting, release report of general direction

On March 14 the committee will present the report to student union for voting. The goal is both to convince all students around a same idea and to convince McGill upper administration. To note is that the McGill Board and students are meeting in a month, Tre will present the work made towards a fall reading break this past semester. The survey might be voted afterwards at the winter referendum.

5. Actionables from Meeting:

- a. List of emails for contact - Bryan
- b. TVM Contact - Tre
- c. When2meet to arrange next meeting time and date - Bryan

Adjournment: 4:37 PM

## February 17, 2019

1. Call to Order: 4:10 PM
2. Adoption of the Agenda;

The agenda is adopted unanimously.

3. Actionables from previous meeting -- None:
4. Discussions:

a. Update on survey analysis by JED Consulting

As mentioned in prior committee meeting, the survey did reach largely across the student population, with 4338 respondents from all faculties and years.

Looking at the timing options, the two most popular responses were late october and early november. As pointed out by JED Consulting, there is a likely correlation with the fact that American Thanksgiving is late november (15% of respondents who voted for late november mentioned thanksgiving as a reason.)

The survey results were analysed grouping positive answers to either 4 days, 5 days or 1 week as “yes” and “would not be willing to do this at all” as no.



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Overall, the most popular option was to start before labour day, with an average of 90% across all faculties. The second best option is starting late august, followed by longer class times. Looking at the least popular options, it seems that it is almost unanimously -except for dentistry - “starting classes before 8:30” which is not wished for across the student population. The following least favourite option, especially among large faculties, is removing study day. It was also pointed out by a member that this answer reflected the mental health concerns raised by students in the qualitative part of the survey, it seems to serve the same purpose than a fall reading break: reducing students’ stress. Looking at leases, JED consulting members pointed out that only 9% of respondents have 8 months leases, an answer which is useful in answering to the administration concerns raised in 2015 about potential problems linked to rent if the school year was to start before september. On the qualitative part of the study, JED Consulting crossed the answers to the closed questions with key words in open answers related to stress, mental health family and friends, physical health etc. They found for instance that about 40% of the respondents did take the time to mention “stress” or “mental health” or “burn out” in the optional questions, which coincides with the 83% of respondents which strongly agree a fall reading break will allow them to focus on their mental health. One thing to point out concerning Macdonald Campus students is that where the option “starting before labour day” is very popular, there is a 27% drop in “yes” for “starting late august”. For more detailed information, the overview presented by JED consulting can be found in the committee drive, [here](#).

**b. Focus Groups Overview**

JED Consulting is starting the focus group this week (February 18) for the largest faculties, namely engineering, Arts, Science, Education, Management. Focus groups will follow the week after with Music, Post-Graduates and eventually professors. The detailed JED Consulting did reaffirm their commitment to including professors in the focus groups.

When it comes to professors, the focus groups could help gauge interest, see how a Fall Reading Break might impact them in terms of mental health, longer class time, or how it might affect the personal research and schedule (ie. Part Time teachers). Whether or not the committee finds interested professors for the focus groups, JED Consulting will put out a survey to their intention. JED Consulting mentioned having difficulties getting in contact with MAUT, Tre Mansdoerfer will help with this issue. The methodology was explained as follows: JED Consulting will be using a software named “Poll Everywhere” which will allow them to ask a similar set of questions to all focus groups. The main goal is to gauge how students’ outlooks might change when faced with the two main proposals (see c.), to have a clearer picture of what they are willing to give up and how impactful a fall reading break might be. The focus group will also be able to provide students with a concrete perspective on what the options are but JED Consulting believes they should have the opportunity to discuss first their interests and concerns before being presented with the solutions.

In terms of recruitment, there is for respondents mainly from the faculty of Arts and a concerning lack of representation from faculty of Education, Medicine and Dentistry. The faculty members within this committee are to use their platforms for recruitment. JED Consulting also emphasized on word-of-mouth as the most efficient recruitment technique. Bryan Buraga is in contact with the education representative on this committee who has people ready to participate in the focus groups.



Using the focus groups to see how responses changed when students who said yes to starting before labour day are asked about starting late august.

c. Update from McGill Senate Subcommittee

Tre Mansdoerfer reported to the committee on the two most popular options discussed in detail within the McGill Senate subcommittee last Friday. Below is a run-down of what the academic calendar might look like with those changes and the drawbacks associated with each.

i. Starting classes before Labour day

The subcommittee prepared an overview of the next 7 years if classes started the monday before labour day. 3 of those 7 years would have classes starting as early as August 25th. One of the main benefits from this solution is the extension of exam period for at least 3 of those 7 years, with up to 13 days of exam period. It was pointed out that this would create a less stressful exam period for students. As of now, exam season in December lasts around 11 days, a change in the past years had put it down from 12 to 10 days which had widely negative effects on students. It can also be thought as a possibility to start the December break a day earlier. The fall-reading break would therefore be scheduled on week 7 or 8 of the term depending on the year, which coincides with the most popular timing options on the survey. The only years were exam period would be 10 to 11 day long are years were the first monday before Labour Day falls on August 30th or 31st. One thing to note is that exam days cannot be transferred to the next semester.

A few drawbacks of this proposal were discussed in the committee. First of all the necessity to change move-in day for McGill residences as well as Frosh and Orientation dates. The plan should also take into account field study courses which might be affected (for ie. Biology students) as well as internship (engineering or architecture ones which have a 16-week requirement ). More information is needed on those two last points to come up with a clearer plan.

ii. Adding 4 to 5 minutes to class time

The daily-schedule is divided in 3 hours blocks in McGill which are then divided in class hours. As of now, the first block starts at 8:35am and the last one ends at 6:00pm. Adding four to five minutes to class time would therefore shift the block times by 15 minutes. Classes might start slightly earlier with this option, which is not a solution favoured by students. It would also affect the School of Continuing studies class time which, as it now, has classes between 6:00 pm and 9:00 pm. A week-long break might be achievable with 5-min class time added. With four-minutes, shortening the 10-min commute time by 1 minute could also be considered.

d. Preliminary Decision on Direction of Report/Recommendations

Committee members debated on which direction was to be taken.

The consensus was on going with classes starting before Labour day. It was voted unanimously.

Among the concerns raised for the longer class time options was the impact on The School of Continuing Studies, especially commuters to West Island who might not make the last train. It was also pointed out that a 20/30 min earlier start would be a significant difference for commuters as well as Macdonald campus students. This option would also not have a favourable impact on exam period like the other one does. Lastly, looking back on the results of the survey, starting classes before 8:30 was unanimously the least favoured option among all faculties. On the positive side, this option would



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not be a significant problem for accreditation hours in engineering. This option will still be tested, along the selected one, on the focus groups.

The drawback of the option the committee voted on are as follow. First of all, faculties of Dentistry and Medicine who follow a 3-months block schedule might not be able to opt-in, same goes for the Faculty of Law. It was pointed out that it is not a concerning issue as students in those faculties take little to no courses in other faculties. As explained in c), we would have to take into account field placements and internships, as well as the specific schedules of Nursing, PTOT, Education and Social Work students.

Lastly, more research needs to come through on how this solution will impact McGill Services who will have to adjust their schedules to the new academic calendar.

e. Calendar

On March 14th, the report will be submitted to Legislative council. Campaign period will start on March 19th, the committee will therefore have to work on promotion and education on the plan to the student body (TVM, McGill newspaper were mentioned as campaign materials). Members agreed to come up with a single solution to be put forward, as opposed to the multiple confusing choices submitted in 2015 which hindered the ability to come to a consensus. Voting ends on March 28th. In parallel, the ESAAC subcommittee will work on the proposition to and come up to a recommendation for senate, where the amendment will be voted.

For Tre Mansdoerfer, the fall reading break could be implemented in 2020 or more realistically in 2021, keeping in mind that the committee would prefer to see it happen while the same Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) - Fabrice Labeau - is working with us.

5. Actionables from Meeting:

6. Meeting time:

The next meeting will take place on March 10th, 2019 between 4 and 5pm in the SSMU Boardroom. The report will be presented, amended if need be and voted at this meeting.

Adjournment: 4:54 PM

## March 10, 2019

1. Call to Order: 4:10 PM

2. Adoption of the Agenda;

The committee members approved the agenda.

3. Actionables from previous meeting -- None:

4. Discussions:

a. JED Consulting Report

JED consulting was represented at the meeting by Bryan Jay, he presented the full report prepared during the past weeks. The full power-point can be found in the committee drive or [here](#). They are considering adding the input collected from teaching staff to the present version of the presentation. The first part of the presentation goes through the survey as was done in the last meeting. JED consulting added some more qualitative insights like testimonials. As can be seen in the slides, they ranked three first order consequences:



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- 1) need to study and catch up on coursework
- 2) going home and seeing family
- 3) have more time for extracurricular and dealing with post graduation; and followed with three second order consequences:
  - 1) reducing the risk of burnout and improving mental health
  - 2) reducing the stress on physical health -including weather related illnesses- and having midterms better scheduled
  - 3) allowing students to take and manage a full course load in the fall semester.

b. Committee Report

Committee approved Referendum question and report presented by the Chair. All members will be asked to join Yes Campaign Committee. The Yes Campaign Committee will be chaired by Léa Allonier

5. Adjournment: 4:54 PM