



October 23, 2024

Dear GFC Membership,

On behalf of the Students' Association of MacEwan University (SAMU) and the Grant MacEwan University Faculty Association (GMUFA), we stand united in advocating for the continuation of the Fall Reading Break and the appropriate recognition of faculty work. We implore you to consider the implications of removing this break, we urge you to vote to keep the Fall Reading Break, and we ask you to affirm that any decision made by GFC regarding the 2025/2026 academic calendar is an interim measure, not blanket permission to implement future changes without robust consultation with students and Faculty.

We recognize that Fall Reading Break significantly impacts student mental health and general wellness. It is a crucial time for many students to do paid work, catch up on schoolwork, take care of themselves and manage the affordability crisis impacting our community. Over 4,500 students responded to the survey SAMU conducted, and the message was overwhelmingly clear—students value their fall reading break above other scheduling options. Over 87% of students ranked keeping Fall Reading Break as their #1 priority!

If this break is removed, MacEwan University will be the only major publicly funded university or polytechnic in Edmonton to not have a fall reading break in the academic schedule.

For Faculty, Fall Reading Break is a time to catch up on grading, engage in professional development, and advance scholarly activity and research. The introduction of Sunday exams highlights the growing issue of workload creep. The increasing demands on faculty are concerning for all, as faculty burnout also impacts students. Like students, faculty need breaks and rest in order to bring their best selves to the University, and this rest takes place on the weekend.

Pitting Sunday exams against the Fall Reading Break creates a false dichotomy. Even with the removal of Fall Reading Break, Sunday exams are not guaranteed to disappear. There are alternative solutions that could be explored to maintain a balance of student and faculty well-being, while ensuring there are enough instructional hours to meet program requirements.

Recognizing MacEwan's aim to "Smash the Calendar," it is essential that the impacts on faculty workloads must be fairly addressed. Neither faculty nor students are fundamentally opposed to examinations on the weekends. However, both parties agree that this time must be respected as work outside normal expectations. Faculty should have the choice to either be compensated for weekend exams or opt out of working on weekends altogether.

We urge the membership of GFC to consider the voices of both students and faculty regarding potential changes to the academic calendar. Together, we advocate for a sustainable and supportive learning environment that prioritizes the health and academic success of all MacEwan University students and faculty.

Sincerely,



Darcy Hoogers
SAMU Vice President Academic



**STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF MACEWAN UNIVERSITY**



Bob Graves
GMUFA President

