



**A special meeting of the Senate of the University of Victoria is scheduled for Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. via Zoom.**

**AGENDA** as reviewed by the Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance.

**1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**ACTION**

**2. PROPOSALS AND REPORTS FROM SENATE COMMITTEES**

- a. Pilot for Centrally Scheduled Midterm Examination Period  
(SEN-DEC 13/23-1)

**ACTION**

Motion: That Senate approve the proposed February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot be added to the Academic Important Dates.

Motion: That Senate approve the proposed application of the examination regulations in the undergraduate academic calendar to the February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot.

**3. ADJOURNMENT**



**Date:** December 8, 2023  
**To:** Senate  
**From:** Senate Committee on Academic Standards  
**Re:** **Pilot for Centrally Scheduled Midterm Examination Period**

At its meeting on December 7, 2023 the Senate Committee on Academic Standards considered and approved a proposal from Elizabeth Adjin-Tettey, Associate Vice-President Academic Programs, and Wendy Taylor, Acting Registrar regarding a pilot for a centrally scheduled midterm examination period.

**Recommended motions:**

That Senate approve the proposed February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot be added to the Academic Important Dates.

That Senate approve the proposed application of the examination regulations in the undergraduate academic calendar to the February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot.

Respectfully submitted,

**2023/2024 Senate Committee on Academic Standards**

Yasmine Kandil (Chair), Faculty of Fine Arts  
Elizabeth Adjin-Tettey, Associate Vice-President Academic and Planning  
Hōkūlani Aikau, Faculty of Human and Social Development  
Chekwube Anyaegbunam, Student Senator  
Ashley de Moscoso, Acting Associate Registrar  
Dennine Dudley, President's nominee  
Steve Evans, VPAC's designate  
Jade Fischer, GSS representative  
Andrea Giles, Executive Director, Coop Education and Career Services  
Rob Hancock, Faculty of Social Sciences  
Tim Haskett, Faculty of Humanities  
Julio Navarro, Faculty of Science  
Andrew Newcombe, Faculty of Law  
Sorin Rizeanu, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business  
Tim Pelton, Faculty of Education  
Cleo Philp, UVSS representative  
David Scoones, Acting Associate Dean, Academic Advising (Tri-Faculties)  
Yang Shi, Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science  
Dani Stinson, Faculty of Graduate Studies  
Nathaniel Sukhdeo, Student Senator  
Wendy Taylor, Acting Registrar  
Laura Vizina, Division of Continuing Studies  
Alivia Wang, Convocation Senator  
Ada Saab (Secretary), Associate University Secretary



# MEMO

<b>DATE:</b>	December 5, 2023
<b>TO:</b>	Yasmine Kandil, Chair, Senate Committee on Academic Standards
<b>FROM:</b>	Elizabeth Adjin-Tettey, Associate Vice-President Academic Programs; Wendy Taylor, Acting Registrar
<b>CC:</b>	
<b>RE:</b>	<b>Pilot for Centrally Scheduled Midterm Examination Period</b>

Increasingly, large, multi-sectioned classes have elected to schedule midterm examinations outside of the university timetable. As the number of classes that do this has increased, so too have challenges for students increased – particularly in adapting to this schedule in which conflicts arise for both personal and competing examination situations.

In addition, increases in accommodated assessments have resulted in an overload within the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). Last summer, the Office of the Registrar and Enrolment Services (OREM) centralized the scheduling of accommodated assessments for students requiring extra time in distraction reduced environments. This has continued to prove challenging with increasing need for accommodated assessments.

As a result, both midterm exams held outside regular class times and accommodated assessments have created scheduling challenges for students and instructors. In considering how to move forward in resolving both challenges, the Provost's Office and the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science have elected to explore a pilot for a small centrally scheduled midterm examination period in February 2024. This pilot would provide an opportunity to test a new way to support students who require additional time on their assessments. As well, the pilot provides an opportunity for instructors who hold midterms outside their regular class time to have these examinations scheduled centrally by the OREM.

This memo outlines the proposed pilot background, time period, considerations regarding existing regulations, and commitment for evaluation and report back to Senate.

Senate is responsible for academic regulations and for approving the ten-year calendar and academic year important dates, which include term and exam period dates. This proposal is also asking Senate to ensure that the pilot has considered applicable academic regulations in its development.

**Recommended Motion:**

That the Senate Committee on Academic Standards approve, and recommend to Senate that it also approve, the proposed February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot be added to the Academic important dates.

**Recommended Motion:**

That the Senate Committee on Academic Standards approve, and recommend to Senate that it also approve, the proposed application of the examination regulations in the undergraduate academic calendar to the February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot.

***Background***

An interim strategy was implemented for 2023/24 Winter Session to support accommodated assessments. To handle the anticipated increase in demand for accommodated assessments, the university set aside dedicated assessment spaces in the Clearihue and Human and Social Development Buildings. The university also invested in additional term employees to provide booking and invigilation support. At the same time, faculty and instructors were strongly encouraged to support the university in transitioning from an accommodation-centred pedagogical approach to an access-centred approach. Despite these temporary measures, the number of accommodated assessments continues to grow at a pace that has outstripped available resources and space.

Many instructors teaching large multi-sectioned classes have a long-standing practice of holding midterms outside regularly scheduled class time during the weekend. While offering a midterm outside of the regularly scheduled class time provides the opportunity for all students to write the exam together in one location, and for an instructor to mitigate the risk of academic integrity violations through in-person invigilation, there are challenges to this approach. The university's timetable and calendars do not provide for weekend instruction and assessment outside the final exam period. A lack of coordinated scheduling for students in multiple large enrolment classes has increasingly resulted in weekend conflicts with competing examinations, as well as the challenges for students with conflicting personal responsibilities.

***February 2024 Pilot***

**Centrally Scheduled Midterm Period**

To help address both of these challenges, the Provost's office and the Faculties of Social Sciences, Science, and Engineering and Computer Science, together with OREM, propose running a pilot for a small, centrally scheduled midterm examination period in February 2024. This would be limited to the Faculties of Social Science, Science and Engineering and Computer Science.

This pilot would consist of two days of midterm examinations held on Friday, February 9 and Saturday, February 10. Sunday, February 11 will be held in reserve for rescheduled examinations in the event of exam cancellation.

**Academic Accommodation**

A large location would be utilized, holding up to three scheduled time blocks per day for midterm exams invigilated by the course instructor and/or Teaching Assistants. For multi-section courses, all students in the same course (regardless of the section) will take the midterm examination at the same time and location for up to a maximum 3-hour block. This time period is intended to reflect a universal design principle of additional time for all students (for an assessment that should normally take no longer than 2 hours).

To support an inclusive and distraction-reduced environment, cardboard carrels on desks and ear plugs will be provided. A similar practice has been adopted by other institutions in some situations, such as the University of Calgary, to help address the requirement for a distraction-reduced environment. In addition, those students who require basic allowable materials (e.g., a calculator) will have them provided. Students whose documented accommodation needs can be met through these measures would not be eligible to complete their assessments at CAL.

In accordance with current practice, CAL will continue to manage more complex accommodation requirements, including during the centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot period. For courses participating in the February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm pilot, this would be the only in-term assessment accommodation that the OREM will offer for the January-April term. For instructors choosing to participate in the pilot, the instructor will be responsible for arranging additional accommodations, such as those above, for assessments outside the centrally scheduled midterm period.

***Existing regulations and academic important dates***

The pilot will rely on the following existing academic regulations within the undergraduate academic calendar: [Examinations](#), including Final Examination Conflict and Hardship, and [Examination cancellation](#).

As such, the regulations governing the administration of university examinations will mean students and instructors must follow expectations concerning invigilation, required software, identification, and the regulations for in-person examinations. Any requests for academic concession from undergraduate students will follow the process for in-course concessions per the [Academic Concessions regulation](#).

The Final Examination Conflict and Hardship regulation which applies to synchronous final examinations will also apply to the February 2024 centrally scheduled midterm examination period pilot. In the case of the February 2024 pilot, a conflict or hardship may occur with another scheduled midterm examination or with a course scheduled at the same time as the centrally scheduled midterm examination.

The Examination cancellation policy in the undergraduate academic calendar will apply to this pilot in the event that the university closes during the centrally scheduled midterm examination period. This includes the decision-making authority to cancel affected examinations and the procedure to reschedule to an unused day during the piloted midterm central schedule on Sunday, February 11. If this is not possible, subject to approval from the Chair/Director of the unit, instructors will reschedule or make alternate arrangements for the midterm examination, as outlined in the current regulation.

This centrally scheduled midterm examination period will follow principles similar to those used in scheduling the final examination period. That said, the midterm examination schedule will differ in key ways:

- The pilot will be optional and will not include all courses.
- Courses will continue to be offered on Friday, February 9 and other conflicts could arise on Saturday, February 10 while additional scheduled weekend midterm examinations are taking place.

As noted above, the pilot will address these conflicts in accordance with the Final Examination Conflict and Hardship policy within the academic calendar.

To ensure clarity and transparency, the dates proposed for the centrally scheduled midterm examination period pilot will be added to the university's [Academic important dates](#).

***Evaluation of the pilot***

If the February 2024 pilot is successful, the university could look to implement a longer-term solution of a centrally scheduled midterm examination period for Terms 1 and 2 of the Winter Session in October and February respectively.

It is important to note that this pilot is not intended to address all challenges being experienced by students and instructors regarding academic accommodation. The Student Accommodations and Instructor Workload Joint Working Group is expected to make recommendations to the Provost on long-term solutions. The university continues to review the Academic Accommodation and Access for Students with Disabilities policy (AC1205) and other strategies will have a bigger impact on meeting student needs. In addition, a longer-term implementation of a centrally scheduled midterm examination period would require systems changes as well as communication and process updates. Changes to the existing exam regulations – Examinations, including Final Examination Conflict and Hardship, and Examination cancellation – would also be brought forward to the Senate Committee on Academic Standards for their consideration and recommendation for Senate's approval. This would ensure that a centrally scheduled midterm examination period would be both informed by the pilot and properly supported through academic regulation and accommodation policy.

***Communication plan***

Should the recommended motions be approved, the Provost's Office will circulate an announcement to deans, associate deans, and all academic units to communicate the dates of the centrally scheduled midterm examination pilot in February 2024 as well as updates for accommodated assessments for the January-April 2024 term.