



Policy on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Final Approval Body: Senate

Senior Administrative Position with Responsibility for Policy: Principal and Provost.

Date Initially Approved: 4/18/23

Date of Last Revision, if applicable: N/A

DEFINITIONS

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation ("the Day"): a Federal statutory holiday first observed nationally in 2021, which "recognizes the tragic legacy of residential schools, the missing children, the families left behind and the survivors of these institutions."¹ Preceded by the establishment of Orange Shirt Day, an Indigenous-led, Survivor-founded project where the orange shirt became a symbol of the resilience of survivors and of the harm to Indigenous identity, language and culture by the residential school system.

Teaching and Learning Activity (or Activities): Scheduled activities that include, but are not limited to, classes, labs, tutorials, tests, exams, assignment submissions, and meetings related to coursework or formal instructional activities, at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

BACKGROUND

The legacy of the residential school systems in Canada is an almost total eradication of the history, worldview, languages, and connection to the land of Indigenous peoples. Education is a significant part of understanding the forces which brought about these tragic losses and an instrument for recovery of this history and the work of reconciliation that must take place.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is observed as a Federal statutory holiday but is not recognized as a statutory holiday in Ontario. As such, paid work continues across the University, and the Province, during the observation of the Day. For students, there are cases where work-integrated learning cannot easily cease, and for staff, university operations continue on the Day of observation.

We acknowledge that to call the observation of the Day a statutory "holiday" implicitly suggests that it could be treated as a day for rest, celebration, or recreation. At Queen's, celebration or recreation is not the true intent of the observation of the Day.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

In its role as educator, Queen's University can make important contributions to the reflections

¹ "Understanding the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation." [Source](#).

and observances that are part of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. In the words of Chancellor Emeritus Murray Sinclair, spoken in his role as Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, “Education is what got us into this mess and education is key to getting us out of it.”

The Day is marked by observances to bring remembrance, mourning, and deeper understanding of residential schools’ tragic legacy. The cancellation of all Teaching and Learning Activities is intended to create shared space for non-Indigenous members of the Queen's community to grapple with the legacy of colonialism on Indigenous peoples. Because the Day is not a statutory holiday in Ontario, staff and educators remain at work; the cancellation of Teaching and Learning Activities frees them from instructional obligations and positions them to lead that engagement.

The provision of dedicated time on the Day for non-Indigenous students and educators to learn about and to confront this past and to think and act towards a future that does not oppress Indigenous heritage is an essential part of the educational mission of the University. The dedication of a day is not only a sign of institutional commitment but also important as a commitment to the provision of time for self-directed learning on the factors that led to the oppression of Indigenous life, experience, and culture. One of the highest goals of the University is to provide a learning context that leads to a positive transformation of the individual, and time for personal reflection is essential to that goal.

Queen’s University also recognizes that learners and educators in our university community are First Nations, Inuit and Métis, for whom the observation of the Day has different meaning. By cancelling Teaching and Learning Activities, these learners and educators have the opportunity to return to community to be with relations, or take time to observe the Day in a way that is personally and culturally meaningful.

POLICY STATEMENT

All Teaching and Learning Activities will be cancelled on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

When the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation falls on a weekend, all Teaching and Learning Activities are instead suspended on the weekday identified by the Federal Government for the observation of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation shall be designated within the university sessional dates as a non-teaching day, while still providing for a minimum of 60 teaching days for faculties and schools.

SCOPE OF PROPOSED POLICY/PROCEDURE

This policy applies to all Teaching and Learning Activities within every Faculty and School at the University.

Teaching and Learning activities, such as clinical placements, field work and work placements, that are scheduled in coordination with external agencies or organizations may be excluded from the cancellation of Teaching and Learning Activities. Faculties and schools, however,

should develop and provide resources to students on placements to guide their independent learning and reflection.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Each Faculty and School is encouraged to support learning, reflection and observation of the Day by planning and offering educational events, activities or observances.

While educational events, activities or observances are most ideally offered on the Day, the scheduling of aligned events, activities or observances can be offered throughout the month of September.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning offers pedagogical supports for Indigenization-related educational activities for the Day.

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives advises Faculties, schools, and units planning events and observances in connection with the Day.

All members of the University community are encouraged to honour the Day and use it as a day for learning about, reflecting on, and acting against the factors that brought about the residential school system and continued oppression of Indigenous life, experience, and culture.

Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines: None
Policies Superseded by this Policy: None

Responsible Officer (senior administrator ultimately responsible): **Principal and Provost**
Contact: Principal's Office
Date for Next Review: 2031-2032