

UTM Orientation: The Journey After Reimagining

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1080

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Background and Objectives



Background

- In Fall 2004 (and all years following) the term began the Tuesday after Labour Day
- Previous regular programming would now conflict directly with classes

Objectives

- Reimagine UTM Orientation to address this date change and to improve current offerings
- **Set out to develop the Most Welcoming and Inclusive Orientation**

Reimagining Process in Fall 2023

- A Literature Review
- CAS Standards Review of Orientation
- Student Expectations Review via Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)
- Themed student focus groups (non-attendees, international, identity-based, commuter, etc.)
- Post-orientation survey feedback
- Staff and campus stakeholder consultations
- Benchmarking survey of 36 North American peers, including Cornell, McMaster, Queen's, Waterloo



Above all, Orientation introduced me to plenty of incredible friends I continue to spend lots of time with.



**UTM Orientation 2024
Participant**

Recommendations

- Dozens of recommendations—ranging from small to large, with some implemented for 2024 and others planned in the future
- A general move away from content sessions to community-focused programming
- One Schedule, One website
- Concurrent events: open call for proposals from departments and student groups
- Inclusive, welcoming and accessible program
- Centralized schedule coordination and logistics coordinated by the Centre for Student Engagement (CSE)



UTM Orientation 2024

- 2,600 new students registered and built their schedules!
- Marked increase in attendance, high engagement
- Over 120 programs, activities and events during the 8 days
- Very positive feedback from students, campus departments
- Student particularly appreciated building their own schedule and choosing events as they wished
- Low attendance and engagement with Academic Orientation sessions. Feedback from those who attended was positive



As someone unfamiliar with the Canadian culture and university life, attending orientation events helped me form a pretty good idea of how things work in Canada and reassured me that I made the right choice.



UTM Orientation 2024
Participant

UTM Orientation 2025 – Second Year of the New Model



- 2,500 new students registered and built their schedules!
- Over 130 programs, activities and events during the 7 days
- Departments & student groups hosted 38 events with \$56K in financial support
- 152 student groups and campus partners participated in fairs
- Volunteers program – 158 upper year students, alumni and staff/faculty
- Replaced academic session with 'Academic Garden Parties' - almost 700 attended across the three days

The Future of UTM Orientation

- Continue with the model
- Goal to eventually reach and engage with all incoming students
- More concurrent events, as well as larger-scale events, to accommodate more students
- Continue to encourage event proposals for departments and student groups
- Continuous improvement informed by student and campus partner feedback



I got an idea of what to expect on my first week, and made some new friends. I really enjoyed attending orientation and would recommend it to future students.



UTM Orientation 2024
Participant