

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

1. What is Winter Recess?

Winter Recess refers to the closing of the University's academic and administrative offices December 26, 27, and 28, 2017. This is done in recognition of the season and dedication of Northwestern's faculty and staff. These three Winter Recess days are not holidays but are provided in addition to the already scheduled University holidays of December 22 (Christmas Eve Observed), 25 (Christmas Day Observed), 29 (New Year's Eve Observed), 2017, and January 1 (New Year's Day), 2018.

2. Will all academic and administrative units be closed?

The goal of Winter Recess is to close the University. However, a few areas of the University provide critical, essential services and therefore will not close during the Winter Recess. Those areas will maintain appropriate levels of staff for operations and continuity of service during this period. Staff members in those areas who are not able to be off during the Winter Recess period will be allowed to take the equivalent number of approved days off prior to August 31, 2018.

3. How should individuals at Northwestern notify the community of the Winter Recess?

Those who will be away during Winter Recess are encouraged to provide advanced notice of the Winter Recess to customers and collaborators and should consider indicating the Winter Recess period in their email auto-signatures well in advance of the December 22 holiday. Before leaving for the holiday and Winter Recess, it is suggested that auto-reply messages on email and voicemail greetings be updated to indicate time away from work and identify a point of contact for emergencies. However, it is up to the discretion of the department to provide guidance on the use of and/or messages for auto-replies. Here is suggested language you may wish to use for an auto-reply email message:

Happy Holidays! In observance of Northwestern's Winter Recess, the University will be closed Friday, December 22, 2017 through Monday, January 1, 2018. If this is an urgent matter, please contact <name>, <job title> at <email address> or <9-digit phone number> for assistance. Otherwise, I will read and respond to your email when I return.

OR

I am currently out of the office and will be returning on Tuesday, January 2, 2018. Please note that the University will be closed Friday, December 22, 2017 through Monday, January 1, 2018. If this is an urgent matter, please contact <name>, <job title> at <email address> or <9-digit phone number> for assistance. Otherwise, I will read and respond to your email when I return.

4. What faculty and staff are eligible for Winter Recess?

All Northwestern benefits-eligible and part-time, non-benefits eligible faculty and staff are entitled to participate in Winter Recess; temporary staff should not be scheduled to work during the Winter Recess period.

5. Does Winter Recess apply to staff at NU-Q?

Please check with management to learn if and how Winter Recess will be handled for NU-Q.

6. Can Winter Recess be taken before the Winter Recess period of December 26, 2017 to December 28, 2017?

No. Winter Recess days cannot be used before the December holiday season. If essential staff work during the Winter Recess, alternate Winter Recess days can be used after January 1, 2018 through August 31, 2018.

Essential Staff

7. What is meant by "essential staff?"

Essential staff members provide services that relate directly to the health, safety, and welfare of the Northwestern community and ensure continuity of key operations.

8. Are staff, besides essential staff, allowed to work between Christmas and New Year's Eve?

The goal of Winter Recess is to close non-essential functions and provide staff with time off from work. Unit leadership determines individual department observance of Winter Recess and the roles that are essential to maintain key operations. Staff members not designated as essential may not work during Winter Recess.

9. How do staff members confirm if a position will or will not be designated essential during the Winter Recess?

Unit leadership determines the roles that are essential to maintaining key operations and is responsible for ensuring that unit staff receive the necessary communication. If there are questions, staff should direct those to their respective supervisor.

10. Are Principal Investigators (PIs) able to identify essential roles within individual labs and/or research in order to maintain lab research/operations during the Winter Recess?

Yes. Staff members who are required to work one or more days during Winter Recess will receive their regular compensation for the time worked. An equivalent amount of time off will be granted to staff who worked on the designated days during Winter Recess. Alternate Winter Recess days must be taken by August 31, 2018, and will not carry forward to the next fiscal year or be cashed out.

11. Will essential staff members be paid at a special rate for time worked during Winter Recess?

No. Essential staff members will be paid at the normal pay rate.

Pay and Accruals

12. Are Winter Recess days paid or unpaid?

- Benefits-eligible faculty and staff members: Staff members must be in a benefits-eligible position in order to receive pay for time spent not working during Winter Recess.
- Union members: Staff members covered by a collective bargaining agreement should contact their respective union representative to determine eligibility.
- Temporary staff and student workers: Essential staff will be the only staff scheduled to work. Given there will be minimal to no supervision, temporary staff and students should not be scheduled to work.
- Part-time staff: Staff members in part-time, benefits-eligible positions are paid on a prorated basis for days worked during Winter Recess.

13. Will Winter Recess time used during the fiscal year count toward the hours worked for overtime purposes?

No. Winter Recess days will not count toward hours worked for overtime purposes.

14. Will there be adjustments to the December pay dates?

No. Non-exempt staff can still expect to receive pay on December 21, 2017, and January 5, 2018; exempt staff can still expect to receive pay December 28, 2017.

15. Are Winter Recess eligible staff required to use vacation or personal floating holiday time during the Winter Recess?

No. Winter Recess is being given in recognition of the season and the dedication of faculty and staff. Staff should not claim vacation or personal floating holiday time during the Winter Recess. The Winter Recess Code (WRC) will be automatically pre-populated in Kronos. Essential staff have the opportunity to remove the WRC to accurately reflect time worked during Winter Recess.

16. Does vacation time accrue during Winter Recess?

Yes. Vacation time continues to accrue while staff is in paid status.

KRONOS/Timesheets

17. Will Kronos automatically populate with the Winter Recess Code (WRC) on December 26, 27, and 28, 2017?

Yes. Kronos will automatically populate with the Winter Recess Code (WRC) for December 26, 27, and 28, 2017.

18. How do non-essential staff complete the Kronos timecard, given the Winter Recess Days automatically populate?

No action is needed, as the Winter Recess days will automatically populate on the Kronos timecard. However, time worked or other time used prior to the Winter Recess days should be recorded, as appropriate (e.g., vacation, personal floating holiday, incidental sick, etc.), for the applicable pay period.

19. How should essential staff members enter time worked in Kronos during the Winter Recess?

Essential staff members required to work one or more days during Winter Recess should follow the standard time reporting process. The Winter Recess Code will automatically populate on the Kronos timecards. Therefore, non-exempt and exempt essential staff will need to delete the WRC pay code and hours from the timecard. Non-exempt employees should select the Hours Worked pay code and enter the respective work hours on the Winter Recess day(s). Exempt staff who work during the Winter Recess do not report work hours on the Kronos record.

20. When do staff need to submit their time report in Kronos for the pay period of December 17, 2017 through December 30, 2017?

Time worked for December 17, 2017 through December 30, 2017, must be entered and approved in Kronos by the employee and the supervisor no later than 10:00 a.m. on January 2, 2018.

21. Can a staff member submit their time report for the December 17, 2017 through December 30, 2017 pay period prior to January 2, 2018?

Yes, Kronos is available for time reporting when needed. A staff member can submit their time report prior to the December 17 pay period; however, it is up to the discretion of the department to provide guidance on the early submission.

22. Can Winter Recess days be taken in half-day increments?

Yes. Essential staff members who must work during a portion of a day during Winter Recess may take Winter Recess in full or half-day increments. No less than half-day increments should be taken.

23. How should staff members enter time in Kronos if there is a need for incidental sick time, bereavement, or jury duty during the Winter Recess?

Paid leave for incidental sick time, bereavement, or jury duty only occurs when scheduled to work. No alternative days are given in the event of illness, bereavement, or jury duty during Winter Recess because staff are already being compensated for the Winter Recess time.

24. How should non-exempt staff members enter time in Kronos when required to be on-call during Winter Recess?

Non-exempt staff members should record all time spent responding to phone calls or engaged in work as hours worked in Kronos and should enter the Winter Recess Code (WRC) for the remaining balance of the day. Staff members covered by a collective bargaining agreement should contact their respective union representative to discuss on-call provisions.

25. If an essential staff member works during Winter Recess days, do they get to take another day off during the year?

An equivalent amount of time off will be granted to staff members who work on the designated days during Winter Recess. Alternate Winter Recess days need to be taken by August 31, 2018, and the days will not carry forward to the next fiscal year or be cashed out.

26. How do essential staff members who work during Winter Recess use the Winter Recess time at a later date?

Staff members should use the Winter Recess Code (WRC) when completing the timesheet in Kronos. This time off should be approved by their respective supervisor and needs to be taken no later than August 31, 2018. These Winter Recess days will not carry forward to the next fiscal year or be cashed out.

27. Do staff who plan to retire effective December 30, 2017, still receive pay for the Winter Recess?

Yes.

28. If a staff member transfers to another department at the University, will they retain alternate Winter Recess days?

Yes. When transferring positions, alternate Winter Recess days also transfer with the staff member. While a staff member should make efforts to take the alternate days off before he or she transfers, if this is not possible, he or she should work with his or her new supervisor to schedule this time off for alternate Winter Recess days.

FMLA Leave

29. FMLA Leave is available to staff members who have worked at least 1,250 hours during the past 12 continuous months of service. Do Winter Recess days count toward the 1,250 hours FMLA eligibility requirement?

No. Only time worked counts toward the 1,250 hours FMLA eligibility requirement.

30. If a staff member is on paid continuous FMLA leave, does the holiday and Winter Recess period (December 22, 2017 – January 1, 2018) count against the staff member's 12-week FMLA allotment?
Yes. The FMLA would continue and run concurrently with the holiday and Winter Recess period.

31. If a staff member is on paid FMLA leave, would the staff member be allowed to change the designation of paid leave time and substitute eligible Winter Recess time?

No. The staff member will remain in FMLA status.