
Proposal to Change the Process in Establishing the Academic Calendar: Revision to Faculty Document 2570

The academic calendar serves as an information source and planning document for faculty, staff, departments, and students as well as for many of the administrative offices of the university. The Chancellor and Provost created a working group to address the most pressing issues. A number of institutional policies and rules act as the framework for the calendar. The Faculty Senate adopted these policies December 7, 2015 (Fac doc 2583a):

1. Begin fall semester instruction on the Tuesday following Labor Day, except when Labor Day falls on September 7, in which case begin instruction on Wednesday, September 2.
 - Satisfies State of Wisconsin legislation requires that no public school may commence a school term until September 1.
 - When instruction starts the week prior to Labor Day, it would only be in cases when students had three full days of instruction prior to the Labor Day weekend.
 - The logistics associated with a Thursday or Friday start day prior to the Labor Day holiday weekend are simplified, and the student safety considerations are reduced.
2. Set the start date of the spring semester based on counting backwards from commencement set on the second Saturday in May. The preceding week (Saturday to Friday) would be a 7-day exam period. The Friday before exams would serve as the study day, and the first day of instruction would be set based on counting backwards 16 weeks. As a consequence, the first day of instruction falls on either the Monday preceding, or the Tuesday following, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
 - UW System policy on the definition of the academic year provides that the contractual academic year is defined as 39 weeks of continuous faculty employment, including not fewer than 34 weeks (170 days) of organized services for students including advising and registration, classroom instruction, and examinations.
 - A full range of other constraints, including the requirement for fall/spring semesters with nearly equal numbers of instructional days and the Title IV requirements for a standard length semester are maintained.
 - All course grades must be completed by each instructor and submitted to the Office of the Registrar three days (72 hours) after the last final exam day, regardless of whether or not a two-hour summary block exam was held.
 - The eight-day summary period policy adopted by the Faculty Senate in 1977 requires that the first day be for individual study and review, with no classes or exams. The remaining seven days must accommodate 38 two-hour exam blocks with a maximum of six blocks in a single day: 7:45 a.m., 10:05 a.m., 12:25 p.m., 2:45 p.m., 5:05 p.m., and 7:25 p.m.
 - Conflicts between exams and commencement would be avoided because exams would always be finished on the Friday before the second Saturday in May.
 - Consistent and predictable dates are set for commencement, with the main commencement ceremony always held on the second Saturday in May.
 - In some years, by setting commencement on the second Saturday in May, there will be an earlier spring instruction start date, thus shortening the winter break.
3. Prior to approval by the Faculty Senate, the academic calendar will be reviewed by the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Secretary of the Faculty and others for religious observances. The Office of the Secretary of the Faculty is encouraged to consult as needed

with faculty advisors from relevant academic units, religious leaders, and community organizations.