

Proposed Changes to the Academic Calendar for 2016-2021

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. Over the past year, several issues were identified with the currently approved calendar, as outlined below.

1. Fall semester starts on Friday: For the fall 2016 semester, instruction is scheduled to begin on Friday, September 2, before the Labor Day holiday weekend. This adds only a single day of instruction to the semester but creates a number of logistical challenges and raises student safety considerations. All essential constraints could still be met, even with the loss of one instructional day (from 72 to 71 days) if the start date is shifted to Tuesday, September 6, immediately following Labor Day.
2. Exams conflict with commencement: The scheduled exam period conflicts with the Saturday of commencement in May 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021. This conflict has been resolved functionally by the Office of the Registrar making adjustments to the exam schedule. Ideally this would also be adjusted formally in the academic calendar.
3. Late start to the spring semester: In spring 2017 and spring 2018, instruction is scheduled to start on the Monday a full week after Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In 2019, spring instruction has a similar late start and ending because Martin Luther King Jr. Day is its latest possible day, January 21. Consequently, in 2017, 2018, and 2019 commencement is scheduled for the third Saturday in May.
4. Summer semester schedule: With the current academic calendar, the spring semester ends with commencement on either the second or third Saturday in May. Students may be limited in internships and summer jobs in years when commencement is late. Inconsistency makes multiyear planning for instruction in the summer semester problematic. For example, there is not consistently enough time for a four-week summer session “May term” immediately following the spring semester; such a session may be especially advantageous to provide instructional opportunities to UW-Madison degree-seeking students.

The University Committee will be charging an ad hoc committee to address other issues brought up by the working group. In the immediate term, the University Committee recommends that the Faculty Senate adopt these policies:

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 classes commence after 1 September.
 - 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.

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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 seven 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.
 - Faculty legislation requires that course grades be completed by each instructor and submitted to the Office of the Registrar within six calendar days (144 hours) from the date and hour of each two-hour block scheduled during the summary period.
 - 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.

Impact on summer: These 2 adjustments would enhance the potential for educational offerings. For example, students would know that they could start an internship, summer job or study abroad experience on the 3rd Monday in May. In 6 years out of 7 students would not need to return to classes until after the Labor Day weekend. A consistent opportunity for a 4-week summer session between the spring semester and the 8-week summer session.

The University Committee recommends that the Faculty Senate adopt the amended academic calendar for 2016-2021. Dates affected by the additional rules are highlighted.

PROPOSED ACADEMIC CALENDAR FOR 2016-2021

FALL SEMESTER	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Faculty contract year begins	Aug 29 (M)	Aug 28 (M)	Aug 27 (M)	Aug 26 (M)	Aug 24 (M)
Instruction begins	Sep 5 (T)	Sep 5 (T)	Sep 4 (T)	Sep 3 (T)	Sep 2 (W)
Labor Day	Sep 4 (M)	Sep 4 (M)	Sep 3 (M)	Sep 2 (M)	Sep 7 (M)
Thanksgiving recess	Nov 24-27	Nov 23-26	Nov 22-25	Nov 28-Dec 1	Nov 26-29
Last class day	Dec 15 (R)	Dec 15 (F)	Dec 14 (F)	Dec 13 (F)	Dec 15 (T)
Study day	Dec 16 (F)	Dec 16 (S)	Dec 15 (S)	Dec 14 (S)	Dec 16 (W)
Exams begin	Dec 17 (S)	Dec 17 (N)	Dec 16 (N)	Dec 15 (N)	Dec 17 (R)
Exams end	Dec 23 (F)	Dec 23 (S)	Dec 22 (S)	Dec 21 (S)	Dec 23 (W)
Commencement	Dec 18 (N)	Dec 17 (N)	Dec 16 (N)	Dec 22 (N)	Dec 20 (N)
Official graduation date	Dec 24 (S)	Dec 24 (N)	Dec 23 (N)	Dec 22 (N)	Dec 24 (R)
Last day grades in	Dec 29 (R)	Dec 29 (F)	Dec 28 (F)	Dec 27 (F)	Dec 29 (T)
MWF days	42	43	43	43	43
TR days	29	29	29	29	29
SPRING SEMESTER	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Jan 16 (M)	Jan 15 (M)	Jan 21 (M)	Jan 20 (M)	Jan 18 (M)
Instruction begins	Jan 17 (T)	Jan 16 (T)	Jan 14 (M)	Jan 13 (M)	Jan 11 (M)
Spring recess	Mar 18-26	Mar 24-Apr 1	Mar 16-24	Mar 14-22	Mar 27-Apr 4
Classes resume	Mar 27 (M)	Apr 2 (M)	Mar 25 (M)	Mar 23 (M)	Apr 5 (M)
Last class day	May 4 (R)	May 3 (R)	May 2 (R)	Apr 30 (R)	Apr 29 (R)
Study day	May 5 (F)	May 4 (F)	May 3 (F)	May 1 (F)	Apr 30 (F)
Exams begin	May 6 (S)	May 5 (S)	May 4 (S)	May 2 (S)	May 1 (S)
Exams end	May 12 (F)	May 11 (F)	May 10 (S)	May 8 (F)	May 7 (F)
Commencement weekend	May 12-14	May 11-13	May 10-12	May 8-10	May 7-9
Official graduation date	May 13 (S)	May 12 (S)	May 11 (S)	May 9 (S)	May 8 (S)
Last day grades in	May 18 (R)	May 17 (R)	May 17 (R)	May 15 (F)	May 14 (F)
Faculty contract year ends	May 28 (N)	May 27 (N)	May 26 (N)	May 24 (N)	May 23 (N)
MWF days	43	43	43	43	43
TR days	30	30	30	30	30
SUMMER SESSIONS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Memorial Day (observed)	May 29 (M)	May 28 (M)	May 27 (M)	May 25 (M)	May 31 (M)
3-week session begins	May 30 (T)	May 29 (T)	May 28 (T)	May 26 (T)	May 24 (M)
3-week session ends	Jun 16 (F)	Jun 15 (F)	Jun 14 (F)	Jun 12 (F)	Jun 11 (F)
4-week session begins	May 15 (M)	May 14 (M)	May 13 (M)	May 11 (M)	May 10 (M)
4-week session ends	Jun 9 (F)	Jun 8 (F)	Jun 7 (F)	Jun 5 (F)	Jun 4 (F)
8-week session begins	Jun 19 (M)	Jun 18 (M)	Jun 17 (M)	Jun 15 (M)	Jun 14 (M)
Independence Day (observed)	Jul 4 (T)	Jul 4 (W)	Jul 4 (R)	Jul 4 (S)	Jul 5 (M)
8-week session ends	Aug 11 (F)	Aug 10 (F)	Aug 9 (F)	Aug 7 (F)	Aug 6 (F)
Official graduation date	Aug 27 (N)	Aug 26 (N)	Aug 25 (N)	Aug 23 (N)	Aug 22 (N)