

**UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
REQUEST FOR DECISION**

PRESENTED BY: Len Proctor, Chair, Academic Programs Committee of Council

DATE OF MEETING: January 26, 2012

SUBJECT: **Revisions to academic calendar procedures**

DECISION REQUESTED:

It is recommended:

That Council approve a change to the academic calendar procedures to permit Fall and Winter examinations to begin between 24 to 48 hours after the last day of lectures.

That Council approve implementation of a “Reading Day” in the fall term.

PURPOSE:

University Council approves revisions to university policies relating to the academic calendar.

SUMMARY:

The Academic Programs Committee discussed the proposed 2012-12 Academic Calendar (formerly called the Academic Schedule) at its meetings in December and January. The Registrar requested a change to the academic courses policy so that classes could end on Wednesday, Dec. 5, and examinations could begin on Friday, Dec. 7 and continue to Friday, Dec. 21, providing for a 13-day examination period. The Registrar also requested the implementation of a “Reading Day” in the fall term, which will be scheduled in 2012 for the Friday before the Thanksgiving weekend.

At its January 11 meeting, the Committee agreed to recommend that Council approve these procedural changes. The Committee approved the 2012-13 Academic Calendar including these procedural changes, as shown in agenda item 10.7.

ATTACHMENTS:

Memo of November 28, 2011 from Russ Isinger, Registrar, requesting changes to the academic calendar procedures

TO: Academic Programs Committee of University Council

FROM: Russell Isinger, Registrar and Director of Academic Services, Student and Enrolment Services Division (SESD)

SUBJECT: *2012-13 Academic Calendar*

DATE: November 28, 2011

I am pleased to submit to the Academic Programs Committee (APC) the proposed Academic Calendar (previously referred to as the Academic Schedule) for 2012-13.

The upcoming calendar year is somewhat unique in that there has not been a similar year to 2012 since 1984 and, given where certain key dates fall out (Labour Day, Christmas Day, etc.), this has posed some scheduling challenges for the Academic Calendar, particularly regarding the final examination period. We are also proposing two substantive changes to the Academic Calendar, both of which will require University Council approval and one of which requires amendment of the Academic Courses Policy.

As APC might recall, as a first step in scheduling we always check schedules with the same calendar configuration to see what was done in the past. We confirm the dates of the Christmas break and all statutory holidays (or days in lieu) for the year with Human Resources Division. We plan our February break to coincide with Family Day and school division breaks.

In setting the schedule, the goal is balance – between the number of teaching days per term and the amount of instructional time between MWF classes and TTh classes, as well as between night classes. The Nomenclature Report stipulates that there should be approximately 39 hours of lectures per three credit unit course (this counts a Monday class, for example, as one hour, not 50 minutes as it actually is). We try to come as close as possible to this ideal, but it is difficult to achieve a perfect balance in practice.

The goal is to have 63 teaching days in each term, but sometimes we have 62 or 64 depending on the particular calendar we are dealing with. Thirteen teaching days of each day of the week in each term (i.e., $3 \times 13 = 39$ hours) would be the ideal, but in practice this is never achieved (and this would result in 65 teaching days per term). So a mix of 12/13 days is the goal, though occasionally it is necessary to have as low as 11 (especially on Mondays or Fridays), because some days are lost for statutory holidays, or as high as 14, depending on the peculiarities of a particular year's calendar.

In order to address the imbalance in teaching hours between night classes, beginning in 2012-13 we will schedule night classes with different start and end times for different nights, so that each has approximately equal teaching hours. For example, this may mean that a Monday night class is scheduled from 7:00-9:45 pm, whereas a Tuesday night class is from 7:00-9:20 pm, etc.

As for the first day of classes in September, as much as possible we try to schedule it following Labour Day (only once in the past fifteen years have we started before Labour Day). The scheduling of Orientation, which currently requires two full days, also dictates when the first day of classes is scheduled. **In 2012-13, Labour Day falls on September 3, so we have scheduled Orientation for September 4 and 5, with the first day of classes on September 6.** As an aside, in January we schedule one day back in the office for instructors and staff before the students return to classes.

The other contributing factor of importance is the number of days in the final examination period for the Fall and Winter terms. Due to the recent growth in final examinations in the Fall Term (due to the splitting of six credit unit classes in half), we attempt to have at least 14 days in December, and at least 16 days in April. As well, a 48 hour period between the last day of lectures in the Fall and Winter terms and the first day of the final examination period is prescribed. **We are proposing a change to the Academic Courses Policy that would read as follows: "For the Fall and Winter terms, at least 24-48 hours (1-2 days) should be allowed between the last day of lectures and the first day of the final examination period."** This change to 24-48 hours would allow more flexibility in scheduling in years where there are fewer days available for the final examination period. Even with this change, we will only have 13 days in the final examination period in December 2012. We continue to investigate administrative changes to the scheduling of final examinations that we hope will result in better and earlier schedules for students.

Policies	Rules and procedures	CHANGE requested
c) Final examinations		
ii) Final examination period and scheduling of final examinations	Examination period: For the Fall and Winter terms, at least 48 hours (2 days), should be allowed between the last day of lectures and the first day of the final examination period.	For the Fall and Winter terms, at least 24 to 48 hours (1 to 2 days) , should be allowed between the last day of lectures and the first day of the final examination period

Over the years, our office has also received several requests to investigate a “reading week” in the Fall term analogous to the February break in the Winter Term. After extensive discussion with the Academic Deans of all colleges we have determined that we cannot accommodate this length of break in the Fall Term as it would necessitate either a greatly circumscribed final examination period and/or a start date for classes in August. **However, we are proposing the scheduling of a “reading day” on the Friday before Thanksgiving where no classes would be held.** This would provide a short break in the Fall term analogous to “reading week” in February and is similar to the practice at several other post-secondary institutions.

I have discussed the above proposed changes with the President of the University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union, and will be further discussing these matters at a future meeting of the University Student Council.

I look forward to our discussion of the 2012-13 Academic Schedule at the APC meeting of November 30, 2011.

Yours respectfully,



Russell Isinger

Registrar and Director of Academic Services,
Student and Enrolment Services Division