

## **Frequently Asked Questions relating to EP.12.11**

### **How is the Academic Calendar, that is set by EPC, actually determined?**

Policies governing the Academic Calendar were passed by the Senate and can be found at:

<http://senate.illinois.edu/ep0529.asp>

### **What are the responsibilities currently in place for faculty related to finals and grading?**

There are two policy documents. The Academic Staff Handbook provides basic information that relates. See Chapter 5 Research and Teaching at

<http://www.ahr.illinois.edu/ahrhandbook/chap5/index.html>

The Academic Work Report Requirements state that:

“Faculty members have the responsibility to provide the University with an individual evaluation of the work of each student in their classes. Final course grades are to be submitted to the departmental office within 72 hours of the end of the final examination in the course.”

Also, the Student Code (3-101) includes a statement of faculty responsibility. See

[http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article3\\_part1\\_3-101.html](http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article3_part1_3-101.html)

### **“§ 3-101 Academic Work Report Requirements**

(a) Faculty members have the responsibility to provide the University with an individual evaluation of the work of each student in their classes. Final course grades are entered on the student’s permanent University record at the close of each semester, term, or session.”

General practice is that many faculty report grades the morning of the deadline date, which amount to ~12% of the grades collected. The practice for the Office of the Registrar is to begin the systems processing for recording and calculating the GPAs used by departments and colleges at 5pm on the day final grade submissions are due (at noon). Registrar batch processes after the grade deadline have a defined window of 44 hours (minimum) to prepare for college review.

The proposal will allow minimum timing for academic standing review.

### **Could Fall semester start earlier?**

Academic Calendars are set well in advance, to allow for a large number of coordinated parts which all must work smoothly in tandem. The 2012-2013 Academic Calendar was set by the

Senate on February 19, 2007. Based on the current policies governing the academic calendar, fall semester is set to begin on Monday, August 27, 2012.

The start of the fall semester must include consideration of the beginning of the contract year. Adequate time is needed between August 16 and the first day of classes to accommodate programs like TA orientation and new student registration to avoid conflicts with 9-month employment contracts.

### **Why not shorten Thanksgiving week and have students attend classes so that finals could start earlier?**

The long block of days without classes, allows students, especially students who are separated from their families by long distances, to return home for this holiday week. It was thought that having finals on Saturday was a better solution than modifying the rules related to Thanksgiving week.

### **Could the beginning of Spring semester be delayed?**

Beginning Spring semester later would push out the date for graduation, the beginning of summer session, etc. Academic units and the campus generally plan for a number of activities surrounding graduation, many of which are already set, e.g. engaged speakers, reserved rooms and musicians, etc.

Also, the start of the Spring semester must include consideration of the end of the contract year. Finals must be completed before May 15 to avoid conflicts with 9-month employment contracts.

### **What about a Saturday class during the semester so that finals could be started earlier?**

Many students have weekend employment during the semester, while employers are more likely to expect that students are engaged in academic activities the weekend during finals. It was thought that having finals on Saturday was a better solution than modifying the rules related to Saturday classes.

### **Should reading day be eliminated?**

There were no positive arguments among EPC members for elimination of reading day.

### **How often can this be expected to be a problem?**

We know that similar sets of circumstances will be infrequent, but will occur periodically. For instance, we will face similar issues in the 2017-2018 academic year. We propose a solution for 2012-13, with monitoring to assess how well the proposed solution works. We expect that it will work acceptably well.

### **Should the rules be changed for constructing the Academic Calendar?**

The Academic Calendar is complicated to construct; it must be and is set well in advance. The rules currently in place generally work well. Periodically, an adjustment like the one proposed here may be needed to address similar issues.

### **Why not shorten the final examination periods to 2 hours?**

Final examinations are often the last opportunity that a student has to demonstrate to instructor(s) their mastery and command of the subject and materials learned that semester. We do not want to short change this opportunity for the students in a blanket fashion.

### **Will Saturday finals result in increased stress or hardship for students?**

This is unknown, but we hope with appropriate advance notice this can be minimized.

McKinley Health Center provides students a route for handling illnesses and stress induced problems.

### **What about students, staff or faculty who have religious practice on Saturday?**

There are provisions for students, staff or faculty to request and have exemption/modifications to Saturday finals that interfere with their religious practice. Student rights and responsibilities related to religious beliefs, observances and practices are provided in the Student Code (Article 3, Part 2) at:

[http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article3\\_part2\\_intro.html](http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article3_part2_intro.html)

**Will faculty be able to complete their grading of finals in the shortened time period?**

We realize that perhaps the most difficult burden of the proposed solution may be for faculty and graders. However, given the advanced notice, faculty have the opportunity to plan and prepare their syllabi accordingly, and take advantage of the opportunity to try new examination or grading methods. The Office of the Registrar plans to schedule finals for large enrollment classes as early as possible during the finals examination period.

**Will faculty and staff be able to complete the work needed related to grades processing and making academic decisions in the allotted time?**

It is thought that faculty and staff can complete the work needed under the proposed revision to the Fall Semester Calendar for 2012. Without some revision, there are major doubts about the ability to meet grades processing, drop and probation decisions, and meet federal financial aid disbursement deadlines.

More importantly, without the proposed changes, there was concern that these very important processes and decisions would be rushed, potentially comprising the current measured and thoughtful approach for such decisions. Also, without the proposed changes, there would be increased chance for error because of the time compressions.