

Frequently-Asked Questions

Regarding the Newly-Approved Academic Calendars

1. Why are the start of the Fall semester and the start of Fall instruction changing to begin on Wednesday?

- Without the adjustment, a semester may begin on Thursday prior to the Labor Day Holiday. In this scenario, sections may meet once or twice before a lecture has taken place--creating a pedagogical concern for students who are expected to go to lab before any instruction has been given.

2. Will there still be the same number of instructional days?

- Yes. By starting on a Wednesday and creating a non-instructional day on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, the instructional days will remain equal – 73 days each semester.

3. Why is there a non-instructional day on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving?

- Faculty have raised questions about being able to introduce new material and fully utilize this day of instruction when dealing with low attendance. This is a growing concern, especially as our out-of-state and international student populations grow.

4. Will the Wednesday before Thanksgiving be a new campus holiday?

- No, this will not be a holiday for staff or faculty.

5. Could adding a non-instructional day to the Wednesday before Thanksgiving encourage “vacation creep”?

- Faculty retain the option of creating assignments that would require students to be in attendance on Monday and Tuesday as they will remain instructional days.

6. How do peer institutions schedule around the Thanksgiving holiday?

- There is a wide range of practice around the Thanksgiving holiday schedule with some institutions holding Wednesday as an instructional day, others providing it as a non-instructional day, and still others scheduling the whole week as a holiday.

7. What is the latest end date for the Fall semester in the next proposed cycle?

- December 20 is the latest end date for the Fall semester. This is in line with past practices on the Berkeley campus and with practices at peer institutions.

8. What are other key features of the proposed 2016-2021 calendars that are consistent with recommendations of the Joint Task Force on Exams and past campus practice?

- A five-day RRR period followed by a five-day final exam period, with a schedule of four-exam-periods-per-day, is observed.
- Fall semester begins on Wednesday and fall classes begin the following Wednesday. RRR week begins the Monday after the last day of classes and runs through Friday, the last day of instruction for the semester. Final exams occur the Monday through Friday following RRR week. The fall semester ends on the Friday of exam week and occurs no later than December 20.
- Spring semester instruction begins on Tuesday, the day following the MLK holiday. The last day of classes is the first Friday in May. RRR week begins the Monday after the last day of classes and runs through Friday, the last day of instruction for the semester. Final exams occur the Monday through Friday following RRR week. The spring semester ends on the Friday of exam week and occurs later than May 17.
- Commencement ceremonies (with the exception of professional schools with only graduate students) will be held after the end of the final exam period of the spring semester.
- A 10-day break occurs between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the summer sessions to allow for commencement activities and the turnover of the residence halls.
- Summer session is typically 12 weeks divided into five sessions. All sessions end on the same day. A separate final exam period is not held during summer sessions.
- A minimum of 61 working days are provided between the end of spring semester and the beginning of fall semester.