

University at Albany Planning Calendar Guidelines

11-14-18

Definition: The Planning Calendar specifies start and end dates, tracks meeting patterns, sets final exam start and end dates, commencement dates, and specifies closures related to breaks. It forms the basis of the academic calendar, which then adds registration and add/drop related dates/deadlines. The Planning Calendar includes input from a wide representation across campus. The goal in creating the Planning Calendar is to meet Federal, State, and SUNY requirements regarding a traditional 15-week semester while also accommodating the values of the campus as a whole related to undergraduate and graduate instruction. The Planning Calendar is created by the Registrar according to Planning Calendar Guidelines and the variables in Appendix A, reviewed by the Planning Calendar Committee (which seeks representation from their respective divisions/areas), and then approved by the Provost and President. The following variables will be considered in the creation of the Planning Calendar with the realization that each year will have its unique issues and challenges.

1. The academic year is composed of two approximately equal semesters of fifteen (15) weeks (fall and spring) that allow enough time for Winter and Summer semesters/sessions to take place.
2. The U.S Department of Education clearly defines the requirements of how institutions administer financial aid. All classes must take place within the start and end dates of each semester/session as described in the Planning Calendar. This is to ensure the University remains compliant with Federal Financial Aid regulations.
3. The fall semester can begin before or after Labor Day, depending on the needs of the campus, but will end no later than the third week of December, thus accommodating any need for a facilities shutdown and a winter session.
 - a. Winter Session must be 20 days and final grades must be recorded prior to the start of the Spring semester to align with the distribution of financial aid.
4. The spring semester will begin after MLK, Jr. Day but will end no later than the third week of May.
5. Commencement weekend will be no later than the third weekend of May, thus accommodating a summer session and turnover of residence halls.
 - a. When at all possible final exams will not be scheduled on the Friday of Commencement Weekend.
 - b. When at all possible, final exams will not be scheduled on the Thursday evening preceding Commencement Weekend.
6. Required minimum meeting patterns based on Federal, State, and SUNY requirements and UA time zone patterns:
 - The minimum number of class meeting days for TTH/MW courses is 27.
 - The minimum number of class meeting days for MWF courses is 39.
 - The minimum number of class meeting days for classes meeting once a week is 13.
 - The structure of the calendar shall reflect the following:
 - MWF format – classes meet for 55 minutes
 - TTH format – classes meet for 1 hour 20 minutes
 - MW format - classes meet for 1 hour 20 minutes
 - S/SU format - classes meet for 1 hour 20 minutes

- Once a week format – 2 hours 50 minutes
 - Note: These patterns will vary from semester to semester but should not go below what is stated above.
7. The following list represents days/times that classes will not be in session. These dates will be accommodated as often as possible:
 - a. Labor Day
 - b. Fall recess - October
 - i. Monday and Tuesday to balance Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of Thanksgiving recess
 - c. Thanksgiving recess
 - i. Day before - Wednesday
 - ii. Day of - Thursday
 - iii. Day after - Friday
 - d. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 - e. Spring Break: Albany's St. Patrick's Day parade is always the weekend before March 17th. To maintain town gown relations, the campus has agreed to accommodate a week off surrounding this date to strategically plan for the closure of residence halls.
 8. [From Faculty handbook](#): Instructors are responsible for meeting their classes regularly and at scheduled times according to the University calendar. In the event of illness or an emergency, instructors must notify their department or school so that suitable action may be taken.

Instructors who will be absent from campus during a regular workweek for professional reasons (e.g., to attend a conference), religious observances, etc., while classes are in session, shall inform the Department Chair (or Dean) of these activities in advance. Classes cannot be cancelled under these circumstances; instead, the instructor must find a replacement or present an alternative instructional plan (e.g., timed assignments via blackboard, have a colleague monitor a guest speaker, provide for a take home exam or assignment, etc.). Options must be approved in advance by the Department Chair or Dean.

9. New York State Education Law ([Section 224-a](#)) - Campuses are required to excuse, without penalty, individual students absent because of religious beliefs, and to provide equivalent opportunities for make-up examinations, study, or work requirements missed because of such absences. Faculty should work directly with students to accommodate absences.
10. At least one day will be set aside for Reading Day. A **reading day** is a day reserved for preparation for final exams. Reading Day will be scheduled after all regular class lectures and before final exams. As a rule, Reading Day should not be used as a make-up day and activities should not be scheduled that conflict with students' ability to study for final exams.
11. Six days will be scheduled for final exams. Saturday and Sunday will be used as an exam day when necessary.
12. In the event of cancellations or delays during an exam day, alternate exam times may be scheduled and will be communicated to the campus. Options the campus will consider will include, but are not limited to:
 - a. **Delay:** On the day of a delayed opening, final exams scheduled to begin prior to the opening time will be rescheduled to Saturday (if not scheduled as an exam day), Sunday, or the day immediately following the last scheduled exam day, whichever comes first.

- b. Closings:** Final exams scheduled when the university closes for inclement weather will be rescheduled to the following Saturday (if not scheduled as an exam day), Sunday, or the day immediately following the last scheduled exam day, whichever comes first.
- 13. These guidelines shall take effect for the 2019-2020 Planning Calendar and will be reviewed regularly to accommodate the changing needs of the University.
- 14. Five-Year Planning Calendars will be constructed for consideration.

Summary of variables included in the creation of the University Planning Calendar:

1. Federal, State, and SUNY requirements regarding a traditional 15-week semester.
2. Accreditation standards.
3. Consideration for the “University at Albany Calendar Guidelines”.
4. Start and end dates.
5. Time between Fall and Spring to allow for Wintersession – minimum 20 days
6. Time between Spring and Fall to allow for Summer Session – 12 weeks.
7. Required minimum meeting patterns based on Federal, State, and SUNY requirements:
 - The suggested minimum number of class meeting times for TTH/MW courses is 27.
 - The suggested minimum number of class meeting times for MWF courses is 39.
 - The suggested minimum number of class meeting times for classes meeting once a week is 13.
8. Academics.
9. Break schedules.
10. Desire to maintain positive town gown relations.
11. Inclement Weather – Class cancellations.
12. Emergencies.
13. Faculty and/or faculty family illness – need to cancel classes.
14. Recruitment/Enrollment efforts.
15. Advisement Efforts.
16. Orientation Efforts.
17. Athletics.
18. Performances and Events.
19. Residence Halls Staffing.
20. Vacating residence halls in enough time to allow for preparation for the upcoming semester and for assessing damage charges prior to the next semester.
21. Time between semesters to allow for renovations, classroom repairs, installation of new technologies, etc.
22. Food Service Contracts.

23. Financial Aid - The U.S Department of Education clearly defines the requirements of how institutions administer financial aid. Construction of the planning calendar must align with guidance.
24. Efforts of the Plant – Ability to have facilities ready, perform construction, exercise winter shutdown and energy savings initiatives, when necessary.
25. IT Support for administrative and student systems. Installation of service packs and bundles. Upgrades to Blackboard.
26. Final Exams.
27. Grading.
28. Dismissals and Readmits.
29. Commencement weekend and related activities/ceremonies
30. Awarding of Degrees.
31. Ability of students to secure winter and summer employment.
32. Travel costs for students (students must vacate the campus when residence halls close).

Calendar Committee

Department/Area
Advancement
Enrollment Management
Facilities
Finance and Administration
International Education
Office of Vice Provost for Graduate Education
Office of Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
President's Office
Provost's Office
Registrar's Office
Student Affairs