

Note: please see last page for FSEC and Diversity Committee comments and proposed amendment.

Reading Days for Final Examinations

The academic calendar is very important to the faculty, and concerns about it have been raised at many of the annual Faculty Senate planning meetings over the past decade. Long-standing concerns have included the lack of reading days between the last day of classes and the beginning of final exams, the final exam schedule, and the lack of stability in the academic calendar among others.

Tables 1 and 2 are reconstructions of the timing of the last day of classes and the start of final exams going back to the 2015-16 academic year. Several patterns emerge:

- When the last day of classes falls on a Wednesday, Thursday is always a reading day, and final exams always begin on Friday.
- When the last day of classes falls on a Thursday, final exams sometimes begin on Monday giving students three days to read and study (Fall 2016, Fall 2019, Fall 2024), but other times final exams begin on Friday (Spring 2023, Spring 2024).
- When the last day of classes falls on a Friday, final exams always begin on Monday giving students two consecutive days to read and study.
- It is unusual for the last day of classes to fall on a Monday or a Tuesday. However, when it falls on a Tuesday, final exams start on either Wednesday (Fall 2015) or on Thursday (Spring 2017, Spring 2020).

The end of the semester is typically a hectic and stressful time for students. Not having an extended reading period unnecessarily contributes to this stress and does not allow our students enough time to

- (a) fully comprehend and practice more recent material
- (b) refresh and hone learned skills
- (c) carefully review material to get a deeper understanding and perspective and appreciate the new knowledge gained.

Our students should be provided time to reflect on the entire semester and to enjoy and value new knowledge. Like a puzzle, you can only enjoy it and appreciate the effort it took to put it together after you have fully assembled all the pieces. Moreover, a lot of learning can take place at the end of a course if there is sufficient time to reflect on the material, synthesize it and see new connections. Such extra time can significantly strengthen learning outcomes.

We, therefore, ask the Faculty Senate to consider the following resolution:

Faculty Senate Resolution to Codify and Expand the Number of Reading Days for Final Exams

Whereas, the faculty have expressed a range of concerns about the academic calendar, which have included explicit concerns about a lack of adequate time for students to read and study in preparation for final exams;

Whereas, students rarely have three consecutive days to read and study following the last day of classes before final exams commence and do not always have two days to read and study before final exams begin;

Whereas, the lack of adequate time to read and study at the end of the semester unnecessarily adds to the stress of students at the end of the semester and negatively impacts their enjoyment of our classes;

Whereas, the lack of adequate time to read and study for final exams contributes negatively to learning outcomes;

Be it resolved:

The Academic Calendar must adhere to the following rules regarding the timing of final exams:

- 1) If the last day of classes falls on a Wednesday or a Thursday, then final exams may not be held before the following Monday.
- 2) If the last day of classes falls on a Friday, then final exams may not be held before the following Tuesday.
- 3) We discourage the adoption of calendars for which the last day of classes fall on a Monday or a Tuesday. However, if the last day of classes does fall on a Monday or a Tuesday, then at least two consecutive reading days must be provided before any final exams may be held.

These rules guarantee that students will have a minimum of two consecutive days to read and study for final exams. If the last day of classes falls on a Thursday or Friday, these rules guarantee a minimum of three consecutive days for students to read and study.

Table 1: Last day of classes, reading days, and final exams, 2019-present

	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020*	Spring 2021*	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025
Last day of classes	12/5 (R)	5/5 (T)	12/7 (M)	5/18 (T)	12/10 (F)	5/11 (W)	12/9 (F)	5/4 (R)	12/8 (F)	5/2 (R)	12/5 (R)	5/7 (W)
Reading days	12/6 (F)	5/6 (W)				5/12 (R)					12/6 (F)	5/8 (R)
Weekend Reading days	12/7-8	5/9-10		5/22-23	12/11-12	5/14-15	12/10-11	5/6-7	5/9-10	5/4-5	12/7-8	5/10-11
Final exams	12/9-13 (M-F)	5/7-8 (R-F) 5/11-13 (M-W)	12/8-10 (T-R)	5/19-21 (W-F) 5/24-26 (M-W) Online only	12/13-17 (M-F)	5/13 (F) 5/16-19 (M-R)	12/12-16 (M-F)	5/5 (F) 5/8-11 (M-R)	12/11-15 (M-F)	5/3 (F) 5/6-9 (M-R)	12/9-13 (M-F)	5/9 (F) 5/12-15 (M-R)

* Academic calendar impacted by the pandemic

Table 2: Last day of classes, reading days, and final exams, earlier academic years

	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019
Last day of classes	12/15 (T)	5/11 (W)	12/8 (R)	5/9 (T)	12/8 (F)	5/7 (M)	12/7 (F)	5/10 (F)
Reading days		5/12 (R)	12/9 (F)	5/10 (W)		5/8-9 (T-W)		
Weekend Reading days	12/19-20	5/14-15	12/10-11	5/13-14	12/9-10	5/12-13	12/8-9	5/11-12
Final exams	12/16-18 (W- F) 12/21-22 (M-T)	5/13 (F) 5/16-19 (M-R)	12/12-16 (M-F)	5/11-12 (R-F) 5/15-17 (M-W)	12/11-15 (M-F)	5/10-11 (R-F) 5/14-16 (M-W)	12/10-14 (M-F)	5/13-17 (M-F)

RE: Faculty Senate Resolution on Reading Days for Final Examinations

Comments/Questions from FSEC members

Reading days provide essential time for students to synthesize material and prepare for final exams. Semesters lacking a reading day between the last day of classes and the first day of exams are disruptive to learning and student performance.

The academic calendar must be designed to meet accreditation requirements for credit hours and must follow rules/requirements for financial aid (see proposed amendment below).

FSEC: Endorses

FSEC: Proposed amendments

Under "Be it resolved"

4) If the Calendar Committee believes it cannot construct a calendar for a given academic year that meets all Federal and State requirements in light of the required number of reading days specified in this resolution, then the President and/or designee will meet with either the full Faculty Senate Executive Committee or a subcommittee comprised of the Chair of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, and one or more additional members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee chosen by its Chair to attempt to resolve the issue. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee retains the authority to approve a reduction in the number of reading days in a given semester following a formal request by the President due to extenuating circumstances.

Diversity committee: ENDORSES

DC comment:

"This proposal is a great step forward and long overdue, but the diversity committee thinks we should have two working days as reading days minimally to cover our diverse learners and be inclusive of all study needs for varied familial, religious and learner styles".