

3.18 ACADEMIC CALENDARS

3.18.1 Purpose

This policy establishes a uniform academic calendar for the State System.

3.18.2 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in the Chapter, shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Academic Term” is the time duration of a course schedule, generally a fall or spring semester consisting of 16 weeks, a summer session consisting of four or eight weeks, or an intersession consisting of the weeks between a semester and/or session.

“Drop Period” is in general, the first one-eighth of an academic term.

“Fall Semester” is an academic term that begins mid to late August or early September and ends in December.

“Intersession” is an academic term shorter than a traditional semester or summer session, generally between semesters or between the summer session and spring and fall semesters.

“Semester” is the standard and traditional academic calendar unit which consists of a minimum of sixteen weeks, excluding enrollment, orientation, and scheduled breaks.

“Spring Semester” is an academic term that begins in January and ends prior to the first of June.

“Summer Session” is an academic term that begins about the last week in May or the first week in June and ends late July or early August.

3.18.3 Academic Calendar Standards

The uniform academic calendar for institutions in the State System consists of the fall and spring semesters and a summer session as defined above.

All classes are expected to meet for sixteen weeks, and no institution, academic department, or individual faculty member is authorized to reduce the number of academic weeks in the standard semester without specific approval of the State Regents. Those institutions which reserve the final week of the semester as a testing period shall ensure that all classes meet during the testing period.

The semester-credit-hour is the standard and traditional unit of credit to be used by institutions in evaluating a student's educational attainment and progress. Semester-hour of credit is calculated as follows:

- A. One semester-hour of credit is normally awarded for completion of a course meeting for 800 instructional minutes, (50 minutes per week for sixteen weeks), exclusive of enrollment, orientation, and scheduled breaks. Organized examination days may be counted as instructional days.

- B. Laboratory credit is normally awarded at a rate not to exceed one-half the instructional rate. One semester-hour of credit is normally awarded for completion of a laboratory meeting a minimum of 1600 minutes (100 minutes per week for sixteen weeks).
- C. Instruction offered through a combination of class and laboratory meetings would normally observe the standards set forth above on a pro rata basis. For example, a course offered for four semester-hours of credit might meet for 100 minutes of organized instruction plus 200 minutes of laboratory per week for 16 weeks.
- D. Block or alternative course schedules may also occur within the dates set forth for a semester or summer session. Courses offered during academic terms shorter than a semester will observe the same academic standards involving instructional hours per semester-credit-hour as those courses offered during a standard academic semester. Institutions are encouraged to be flexible in offering courses in alternative schedules to meet student and employer needs.
- E. The drop period is during the first ten regular instructional days of a regular semester and the first five regular instructional days of a summer session, or, in general, the first one-eighth of the academic term. Institutions may also allow students to add courses during this period or a designated shorter period. In either case, appropriate add/drop charges apply. See the State Regents' *Grading Policy* for timelines for student withdrawal.

3.18.4 Approval of Academic Calendars

Each State System institution's academic calendar is approved by the president or the president's designee and submitted annually to the State Regents. The academic calendar shall describe any alternative schedules. Submission is due by January 1 prior to the summer session to which the proposed calendar applies.

3.18.5 Competency-Based Learning

State System institutions have long recognized that college-level learning may be acquired in a variety of settings and can be documented objectively and comprehensively through written or performance examinations and other academically sound procedures. This certification of learning based on the student's demonstration of competency is a valid means of awarding academic credit. The basis for such certification of learning is a valid, credible assessment system which reliably determines whether a student possesses clearly identified, standards-based knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Institutions are encouraged to develop and implement assessment systems which validate competency-based student learning. Such assessment systems should include the following characteristics: (1) Portability: an assurance that the student's current ability levels are of sufficient range to allow individuals who possess such a credential to use