

Academic Calendar Faculty Survey

Intro The president's strategic planning task force on general education has been asked to consider how any proposed changes to the undergraduate curriculum might have implications for the academic calendar. This survey will ask you to share your observations about the existing calendar, as well as your opinions on any potential calendar changes. Please be candid. Your responses, along with those of your colleagues, will provide us with valuable information, and your answers will be treated in a strictly confidential manner. It is important, however, that you know that your answers to this survey will be linked to your email address. This link will allow us to combine your answers with other administrative information maintained by the University that is needed for this study (for example, your department or faculty rank) as well as greatly reduce the length of the survey. Any findings based on this survey will be aggregated and reported in a manner that does not identify individuals. The survey is completely voluntary and you may skip questions you are not inclined to answer. We hope you will do your best to answer all the questions that are relevant to you. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation. If you have any questions about the survey please contact: Rebekah P. Massengill, Ph.D. Associate Dean of the College 408 West College Princeton University Princeton, NJ 08544 609.258.8197 rmasseng@exchange.Princeton.EDU

Section1 The Existing Calendar

H1 Princeton's calendar differs from that of its peer institutions in the placement of finals after winter break, a relatively late start in September, and a short teaching period of only 12 weeks. We are interested in your observations about how the current calendar shapes student learning, as well as your own teaching, research and professional activities.

Q1 In the fall term, the current placement of reading period and finals after winter break (please check all that apply):

- Allows me to expect more from students in their end-of-term papers and projects. (1)
- Leads me to assign more end-of-term work than in my spring term courses. (2)
- Creates challenges for some students, who experience attenuation of learning and/or have difficulty recalling material after the break. (3)
- Has made it difficult for me to schedule research or other travel during January. (5)

Q2 If you've taught the same course in both the fall and the spring terms, which of the following have you observed? (please check all that apply):

- Students retain the course material more easily in the fall than in the spring. (1)
- Students retain the course material more easily in the spring than in the fall. (2)

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- Students seem more stressed during the fall finals period. (3)
- Students seem more stressed during the spring finals period. (4)
- I notice no difference between the fall and the spring finals period. (5)
- Other: (6) _____

Q20 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (8)	Strongly agree (9)
The current calendar is beneficial for students' junior independent work (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The current calendar is beneficial for students' senior thesis work (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q4 During the reading and exam period, (please check all that apply):

- I encourage students to attend office hours with me or other instructional staff. (1)
- I hold additional class meetings or review sessions. (2)
- I schedule research or other off-campus professional activities that I cannot prioritize during the teaching portion of the semester. (3)
- I perform departmental work and other administrative duties. (4)
- I perform other activities (please explain): (5) _____

Section 2 Potential Calendar Changes

H2 Currently, Princeton's late start in September means that students take their final exams in January. Moving finals before winter break could require shifting the Princeton start date to August 24 – 30, but would mean that the formal teaching period would conclude around Thanksgiving. Reading period and exams could be held in December, followed by the winter break and a non-credit bearing intersession period throughout most of January. The spring term could commence in the fourth week of January, with the teaching portion to conclude in late April. A calendar with these basic parameters would allow faculty as many as 8 weeks between the conclusion of the fall teaching period and the beginning of spring term – including 2-3 weeks of continuous working time in January (which is currently interrupted by finals and grading). Below is a visual representation of a possible calendar with these basic characteristics:

Q5 In evaluating the potential benefits and trade-offs involved in moving finals to December, please consider the following statements and indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Disagree (1)	Agree (2)
Concluding the fall term before winter break (with finals in December) would benefit student learning and retention of course material. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Holding finals in December would benefit students' mental health. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moving finals to December would better discourage students prone to procrastination from leaving so much work to the end of the semester. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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<p>I could make substantial use of uninterrupted time in January without diverting time and attention to end-of-term grading. (4)</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>Starting the semester in late August would be challenging for me because K-12 schools are not in session, and this poses child care conflicts. (5)</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>An earlier start to the fall semester would be challenging for me because I am accustomed to traveling up to/through the Labor Day holiday. (6)</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>An earlier start to the fall semester would be challenging for me because I typically use the time in September before the start of classes to prepare for the start of term and/or work on my own projects. (7)</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>I think that students benefit from having a longer period of time (e.g. finals after winter break) to finish end-of-term</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>work in the fall. (8)</p>		

Q6 On balance, would you support moving finals before winter break?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q7 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. If finals were held before winter break, I would support keeping the JP due date after winter break.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Section 3 13-Week Teaching Semester

H3 Reconsidering the academic calendar also provides an opportunity to reallocate the teaching portion of each semester. Princeton's 15-week semester currently includes 12 weeks of formal teaching followed by 3 weeks of reading/finals period. The formal teaching period could be extended to 13 full weeks, followed by a 2-week reading and exam period (with no teaching expected during reading period). The total length of the semester would remain unchanged at 15 weeks. Below is a visual representation of a possible calendar with these basic characteristics:

Q8 In evaluating the potential benefits and trade-offs involved in a 13-week teaching semester, please consider the following statements and indicate whether or you agree or disagree with each:

	Disagree (1)	Agree (2)
I would use the additional time in a 13-week teaching period to cover the existing content in my lower-level courses. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would use the additional time in a 13-week teaching period to cover the existing content in my upper-level courses. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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I would use the additional time in a 13-week teaching period to add more content to my lower-level/introductory courses. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would use the additional time in a 13-week teaching period to add more content to my upper-level courses. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can teach my courses adequately in the existing 12week teaching period. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A 13th week of teaching/shortened reading and exams period would significantly reduce the time I have to devote to my scholarly work, travel, or other administrative responsibilities. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A shortened reading and exams period would require me to lower my expectations for students in their end-of-term work. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A shortened reading period and exam period would negatively impact students' learning (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If reading period were shortened, I would scale back my expectations of students' end-of-term work. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 On balance, would you support lengthening the teaching portion of the semester to 13 weeks, with a shortened reading and exams period?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Section 4 Other Comments

Q10 Please share with us any other comments about the existing academic calendar and/or these potential changes:

Section 5 Thank you for completing the survey. If you have any questions, please contact: Rebekah P. Massengill, Ph.D. Associate Dean of the College 408 West College Princeton University Princeton, NJ 08544 609.258.8197 rmasseng@exchange.Princeton.EDU If you are ready to submit your survey, please click the submit button. Once you click the submit button you will not be able to change your answers. If you are not ready to submit your questionnaire, please close your browser window without clicking submit.