

Academic Board

Principles for Principal Dates

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In theory the issue of principles should be relatively simple and uncontroversial. In reality, UNE's Principal Dates have been predominantly governed by significant and occasionally competing, business considerations.

These considerations are dictated by, for example:

- a large external (and offshore) student population;
- large student nurse and teacher (and future student doctor) populations;
- infrastructure (such as the residential colleges and Services UNE) that is required to be self-sustaining;
- parallel academic years (such as the GSB trimester-based year); and
- competitiveness with other universities (academic year start)

There are also major academic considerations such as the appropriate length of the academic year, length of terms, timing of Orientation, residential schools and examinations, and the ability of staff to engage in collaborative scholarship such as attending conferences (Universities Australia Common Week).

The following is set of guidelines on setting principles for the Principal Dates with critical considerations in priority order.

It is not suggested that the Principal Dates should never change. Principal Dates should be adapted to meet changing priorities and circumstances but changes should be considered in the light of major related and recognised factors.

PRIMARY PARAMETERS FOR PRINCIPAL DATES

1. The main academic teaching program should comprise:
 - Two thirteen week teaching semesters
 - Two two-week periods for end-of-semester assessment
2. Semester 1 should have two terms of 6/7 or 7/6 weeks in length
3. Semester 2 should have two terms of 6/7 or 7/6 weeks in length
4. Summer semester shall commence on the last Monday in November and end on the last Friday in January.
5. Mid-semester vacations must have sufficient length to allow enough consecutive residential schools to meet typical external enrolment patterns.
6. Academic year start should be in reasonable concert with major NSW competitors - neither too early nor too late in Feb.

7. Academic year start must allow at least four weeks teaching before statutory HECS census (31 Mar) to allow students sufficient time to evaluate their enrolment and decide whether or not to commit to the HECS/fee liability.
8. Academic year end must be early enough to allow sufficient time for results' release, typically at least 10 working days before Christmas.
9. Statutory census must not fall later than six weeks into semester.
10. Easter falls where it falls - no special accommodation is made for mid-semester vacation to accommodate early or late Easter holidays.
11. Autumn Graduation ceremonies shall be held in late Mar/early Apr as best possible (that is, subject to Easter). Spring graduation shall be the Friday and Saturday after NSW Labour Day public holiday.
12. No teaching takes place on NSW Public Holidays.
13. Term dates shall accommodate student teacher practicum requirements in the NSW public education system.
14. [Inward] Enrolment deadlines must take allowance of what is considered academically reasonable for a late start to teaching, and for organisational stability.
15. [Outward] Enrolment deadlines must take allowance of what is fair to the students and the organisational needs of the University to make final arrangements for end-of-semester assessments.
16. Universities Australia Common Weeks will be accommodated in UNE vacations as far as the requirements of the UNE academic program allow.
17. Open Day shall be the first Friday in September.
18. Draft Principal Dates shall have at least one month circulation for comment and then shall be submitted to the Academic Board and the Vice-Chancellor's Committee for endorsement prior to submission to Council for approval not later than 20 months before their implementation (that is, by Apr 07 for 2009). Planning dates for 2+ years from the current academic year may be distributed for initial planning and comment as required. All drafts will be published in the UNE intranet and shall be specifically distributed to:

DVCs

PVCs

Academic Directors or Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning)

Heads of Schools

Dean of Graduate Studies

Heads of Colleges

Directors PIR, Research Services, SAS, TLC

The Librarian

Head, Secretariat

Campus Conference Company

International Precinct

Services UNE

19. Draft Principal Dates shall include the following:

Year start

Year end
Semester/Trimester start
Semester/Trimester end
Designated Residential schools period starts
Designated Residential schools period ends
Classes begin in on-campus units
Classes end in on-campus units
Examinations start
Examinations end
Final date for release of examination results
Enrolment deadlines
Graduation ceremonies
Orientation programs
Open Day
Gazetted NSW public holidays

OTHER POINTS

- The GSB trimester academic year is an independent, parallel academic year and is negotiated with the GSB as part of the draft Principal Dates negotiations.
- Parallel academic years (such as that of the Joint Medical Program being offered by the University of Newcastle and UNE) will be declared as part of the UNE Principal Dates but negotiated separately in accordance with policy (such as the bilateral agreement for the BMed program).
- Other business dates (Council meetings, Board meetings, Boards of Examiners) shall be inserted by negotiated agreement with appropriate business managers and communicated to the Manager, Information Integrity (SAS).
- The Principles for Principal Dates shall be reviewed regularly by the Academic Board.
- Principal Dates shall be determined by (a) endorsement by Academic Board and the Vice-Chancellor's Committee and (b) approval by Council.
- Drafting, circulation for comment, submission to the VCC and subsequent publication of approved Principal Dates shall be the responsibility of the Directorate of Student Administration and Services (Information Integrity).
- The Secretary to Council will inform the Director, Student Administration and Services, of Council's approval of the Principal Dates.

Codes

DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
GSB	Graduate School of Business
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
SAS	Student Administration and Services
TLC	Teaching and Learning Centre
UAC	University Admissions Centre
VCC	Vice-Chancellor's Committee