

# The Report of the 2016-17 Academic Calendar Committee

May 19, 2017

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Marianella Casasola, Associate Professor, Human Development

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Cassie Dembosky, University Registrar

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## Executive Summary

After identifying key issues associated with the Current Calendar and after assimilating thousands of comments from across the Cornell community, the Committee developed two alternative calendars.

Both feature an expanded new student orientation period, a slightly compressed study/exam period that is consistent for both fall and spring, and two additional class days after Thanksgiving.

The Modified Current Calendar keeps Commencement on Memorial Day weekend, adjusts the positions of the two spring-semester breaks, increases the number of Senior Days from two to five. (A “Senior Day” is defined to be any day between the last exam day and the Friday of commencement weekend.) It adds one work week to the summer and decreases the between-semester break by three days. With this calendar the start of the Spring semester is one day earlier.

The Early Commencement Calendar holds Commencement two weekends before Memorial Day weekend, has no February break, and has the same number of Senior Days as the Current Calendar. It adds about fifteen days to the summer and subtracts ten days from the between semester break. With this calendar the start of the Spring semester is eight days earlier.

Members of the Faculty Senate, the Student Assembly (SA), the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA), the Employee Assembly (EA), and the University Assembly (UA) were asked to rank the Current Calendar, the Modified Current Calendar, and the Early Commencement Calendar. Members of the Calendar Committee and the Senate’s Educational Policy Committee were also asked to rank the three options. Here are the results:

Choice			Assembly					Committee	
First	Second	Third	Senate	SA	GPSA	EA	UA	Calendar	EPC
Modified	Early	Current	15	5	2	2	4	5	5
Modified	Current	Early	44	17	10	9	11	7	1
Early	Modified	Current	22	2	2	7	3	4	3
Early	Current	Modified	1				1		
Current	Modified	Early	17		4	1	1		1
Current	Early	Modified	1		1				
Voted ->			100	24	19	19	20	16	10
Eligible ->			101	29	22	20	20	16	10

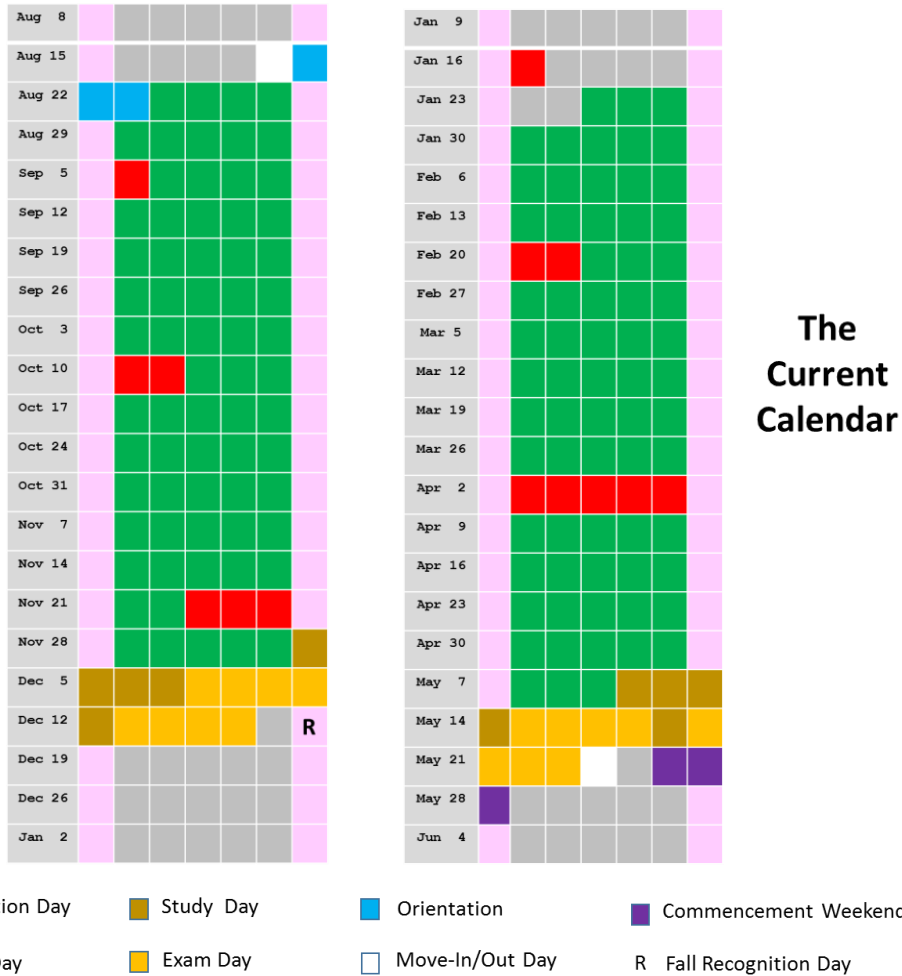
Across all constituencies and in both committees, there is a clear preference for the Modified Current Calendar. Appendix 6 includes comments from those members of the Academic Calendar Committee who wished to elaborate on their ordering of the options.

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# 1. Overview

The current calendar took effect AY 2013-14 and this is what it looks like in a typical year:



Issues with this calendar include the early August start, the extremely long between-semester break, the positioning of the spring-semester breaks, and the relatively short summer break. The adoption of the current calendar in 2012 included a stipulation that it be reviewed after three years of experience. Thus, our committee was formed last fall and formally charged by the Provost to examine all aspects of the calendar and to make academically-driven recommendations. See Appendix 1. Although our review has been comprehensive, we primarily focused on these issues

- (a) How to position breaks so that they support learning and wellbeing.
- (b) How to increase summertime opportunities for scholarship and employment.
- (c) How to enhance the value of class days before and after Thanksgiving.
- (d) How to structure an effective orientation period and study/exam period





or late (Nov 28). The above calendar displays are for an academic year that has an “average” Thanksgiving (Nov 25).

Calendar analysis requires that attention be paid to every possible instance and we have done that over the course of our deliberations<sup>1</sup>.

Each of the three calendar options through 2027-28 are delineated in the appendices.

This table displays some of their key attributes:

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Modified</b>	<b>Early</b>
Orientation Days	3	5	5
Fall Break Days	2	2	2
Thanksgiving Break Days	3	3	3
Class Days After Thanksgiving	5	7	7
February Break Days	2	2 (but later)	None
Spring Break Days	5	5	5
Last Exam-to-Commencement Days	4	7	4
Study Days + Exam Days	5+8	4+7	4+7
Commencement	Memorial Day Weekend	Same	2 Weeks Earlier

## 2. Comparisons

The careful ranking of the three possible calendar frameworks requires side-by-side comparisons of their properties. We identify two important calendar attributes:

The length of the Dec/Jan break is the number days between the last December exam day and the first January class day.

The length of the summer break is the number of days between the last exam day in May and the first class day in August.

These properties are reported in the following comparison tables.

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<sup>1</sup> We discovered, for example, that the super-early 2016 February break will not happen again until 2032 should we continue on with the current calendar.

## The Current Calendar

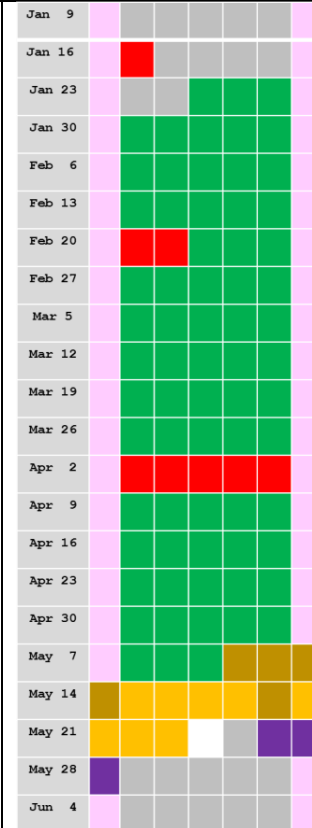
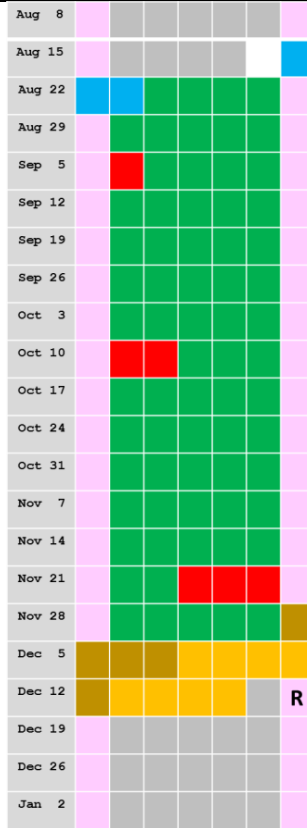
### Fall Semester Properties

Class Days 68  
 Weekdays 12,14,14,14,14  
 First Class Day Aug 21-27  
 Last Exam Day Dec 13-19

### Spring Semester Properties

Class Days 69  
 Weekdays 13,13,15,14,14  
 First Class Day Jan 21-27  
 Last Exam Day May 19-25

Dec/Jan Break 33 or 40 days  
 Summer Break 90 or 97 days



## The Modified Current Calendar

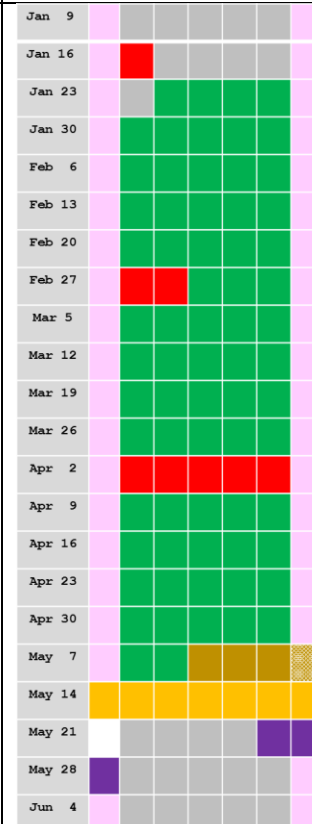
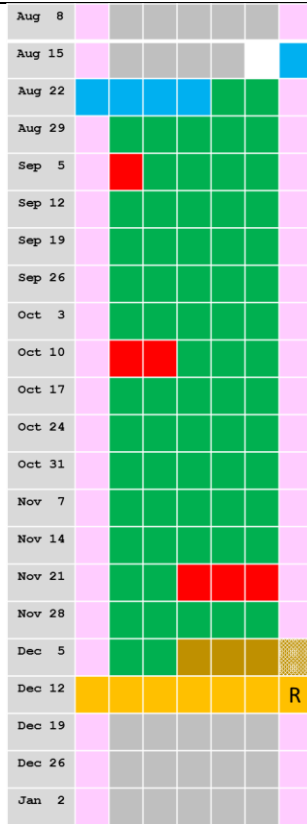
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 Last Exam Day Dec 15-21

### Spring Semester Properties

Class Days 69  
 Weekdays 13,14,14,14,14  
 First Class Day Jan 20-26  
 Last Exam Day May 16-22

Dec/Jan Break 30 or 37 days  
 Summer Break 95 or 102 days





### The Current Calendar

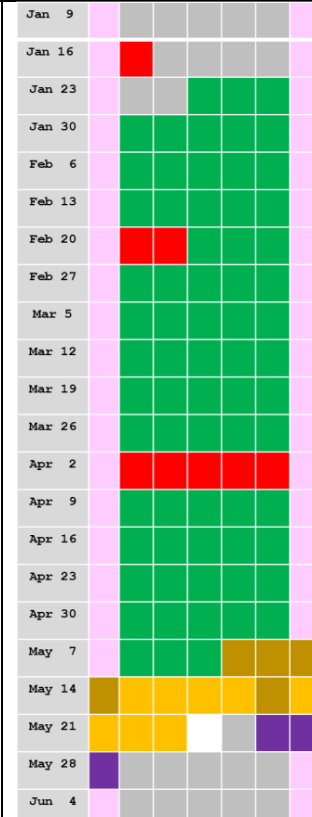
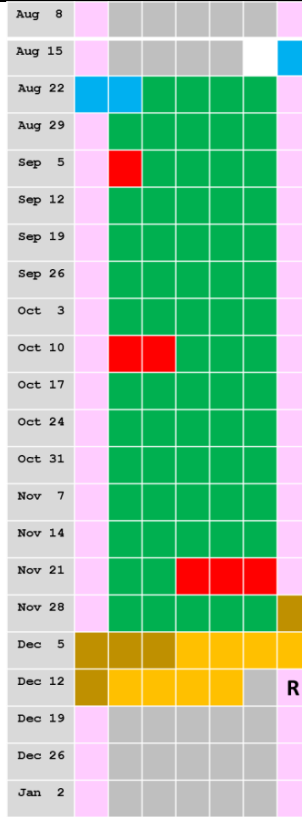
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### The Early Commencement Calendar

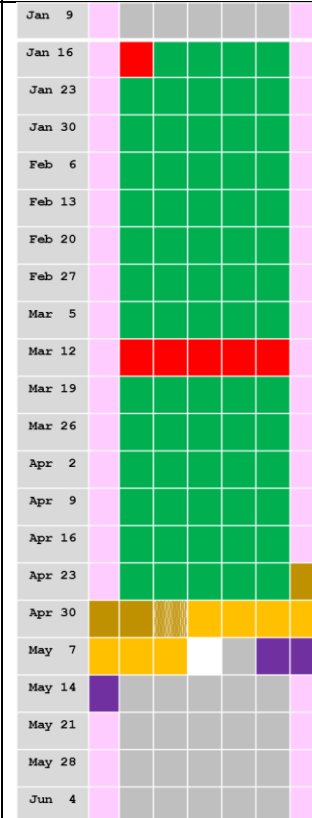
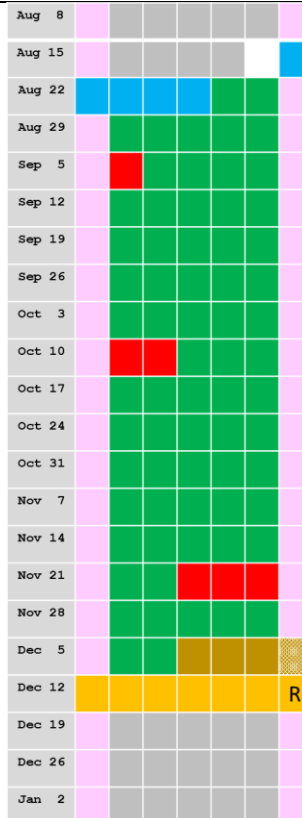
#### Fall Semester Properties

Class Days 68  
 Weekdays 13,14,13,14,14  
 First Class Day Aug 23-29  
 Last Exam Day Dec 15-21

#### Spring Semester Properties

Class Days 69  
 Weekdays 13,14,14,14,14  
 First Class Day Jan 12-19  
 Last Exam Day May 5-11

Dec/Jan Break 22 or 30 days  
 Summer Break 106 or 113 days



### The Modified Current Calendar

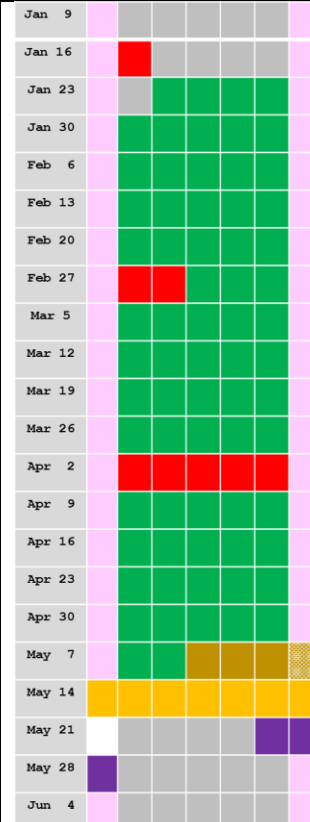
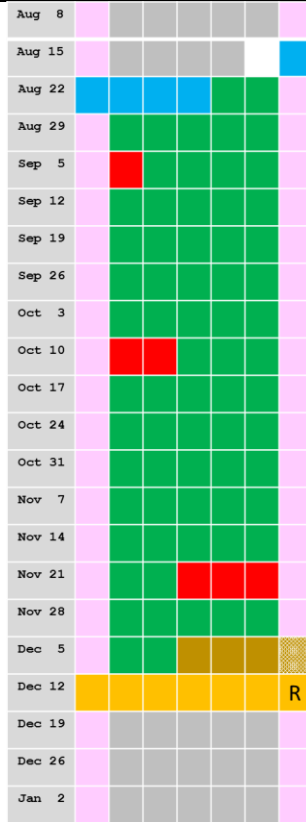
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Dec/Jan Break 30 or 37 days  
 Summer Break 95 or 102 days



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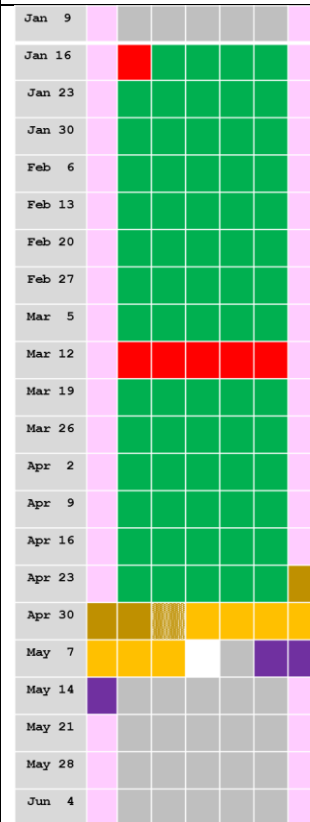
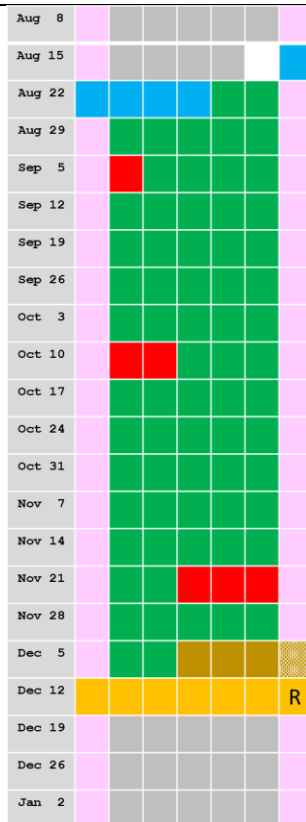
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We stress again that for any calendar implementation there are seven possible fall semester instances and fourteen possible spring semester instances. This is because the calendar “anchor points” (Thanksgiving and Memorial Day) move from year to year.

This variability in the Gregorian calendar impacts two extremely important academic calendar attributes: the length of the between-semester break and the length of the summer break. Here is a tabulation of these and related features for the next ten years. The entries are color-coded for clarity:

Current Calendar  
Modified Current Calendar  
Early Commencement Calendar

Academic Year	Fall Start	Fall End	Between Term Days	Spring Start	Spring End	Summer Days	Summer Work Weeks
2018-19	Aug 21	Dec 13	40	Jan 23	May 21	97	13
	Aug 22	Dec 22	37	Jan 22	May 18	101	14
	Aug 22	Dec 22	30	Jan 14	May 7	112	15
2019-20	Aug 27	Dec 19	33	Jan 22	May 19	97	13
	Aug 28	Dec 21	30	Jan 21	May 16	101	14
	Aug 28	Dec 21	22	Jan 13	May 5	112	15
2020-21	Aug 25	Dec 17	40	Jan 27	May 25	90	12
	Aug 26	Dec 19	37	Jan 26	May 22	94	13
	Aug 26	Dec 19	30	Jan 19	May 11	105	14
2021-22	Aug 24	Dec 16	40	Jan 26	May 24	90	12
	Aug 25	Dec 18	37	Jan 25	May 21	94	13
	Aug 25	Dec 18	30	Jan 18	May 10	105	14
2022-23	Aug 23	Dec 15	40	Jan 25	May 23	90	12
	Aug 24	Dec 17	37	Jan 24	May 20	94	13
	Aug 24	Dec 17	30	Jan 17	May 9	105	14
2023-24	Aug 22	Dec 14	40	Jan 24	May 21	97	13
	Aug 23	Dec 16	37	Jan 23	May 18	101	14
	Aug 23	Dec 16	30	Jan 16	May 7	112	15
2024-25	Aug 27	Dec 19	33	Jan 22	May 20	97	13
	Aug 28	Dec 21	30	Jan 21	May 17	101	14
	Aug 28	Dec 21	22	Jan 13	May 6	112	15
2025-26	Aug 26	Dec 18	33	Jan 21	May 19	97	13
	Aug 27	Dec 20	30	Jan 20	May 16	101	14
	Aug 27	Dec 20	22	Jan 12	May 5	112	15
2026-27	Aug 25	Dec 17	40	Jan 27	May 25	90	12
	Aug 26	Dec 19	37	Jan 26	May 22	94	13
	Aug 26	Dec 19	30	Jan 19	May 11	105	14
2027-28	Aug 24	Dec 16	40	Jan 26	May 23	90	12
	Aug 25	Dec 18	37	Jan 25	May 20	94	13
	Aug 25	Dec 18	30	Jan 18	May 9	105	14

If a summer has twelve “work weeks” then there are twelve contiguous Monday-through-Friday “pay periods” between the last exam day in May and the first class day in August.

The current calendar has a relatively short summer, which impacts employment and internship opportunities for our students. Correcting this has been a major concern for the Committee and from the above table we see that both of the new calendar options provide more summer work weeks.

### 3. The Fall Semester: Issues, Tensions, and Improvements

The two alternative calendar options have the same fall semester. We discuss the optimizations that led to the chosen design.

In the following we refer to the Current Calendar as the “C” calendar, the Modified Current Calendar as the “M” calendar, and the Early Commencement Calendar as the “E” calendar.

#### *Semester Start*

The surveys identified two reasons why a later start to the fall semester might be preferred. First, it would lengthen the summer break thereby creating more worthwhile summertime opportunities for students. Second, it would decrease the number of August childcare days.<sup>2</sup>

The first day of class for the M and E calendars is two days later than that for the C calendar--classes start on a Thursday instead of a Tuesday. Having a later August start would require considerable sacrifice because the total number of class days plus exam days must be at least 75 according to NYS department of education rules. Here are the options available to us if we want to further reduce the number of August class days:

- (a) Make the Tuesday of Fall break a class day.
- (b) Make Labor Day a class day.
- (c) Make the Wednesday before Thanksgiving a class day.
- (d) Reduce the 11-day study/exam period to something less.

Given the full array of requests and concerns that were communicated to us through the surveys, the Committee viewed these options for an earlier August start as unacceptable.

#### *New-Student Orientation*

The Cornell has a much shorter orientation period compared to all our peers. See Appendix A2.1. We are enthusiastic in our support of longer, carefully designed orientation period. The M and E calendars include a 5-day orientation.

#### *Fall Break*

There is broad consensus that fall break is properly positioned and that it supports academic success.

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<sup>2</sup> We define a “childcare day” to be a weekday in which Cornell holds classes but the public schools do not. The number of childcare days over the course of the academic year is a very important calendar-related metric for faculty, staff, and students who have school-age children. It is an approximate measure because it does not take into account half-days associated with elementary school parent-teacher conferences, Regents exam testing days, snow days, etc.

### *Thanksgiving Break*

Several of our peers have a 5-day Thanksgiving break and community polling suggests that many would like for Cornell to adopt this. (Informally, many students already take a 5-day Thanksgiving break--class attendance is poor on the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving week.) However, we decided against this option because the two lost class days would have to be made up through either an earlier August start or an unacceptably compressed study/exam period.

### *Post-Thanksgiving Classes*

The five class days after Thanksgiving are in many ways as devalued as the two class days before Thanksgiving. It is hard to introduce any new material in this period, and these five days are often tight and stressful as students rush to complete large end-of-semester assignments. By adding two class days after Thanksgiving we are creating an opportunity for faculty to bring their courses to a more graceful and academically sound conclusion through review and course wrap-up. Students with end-of-semester projects would have an extra weekend to bring them to completion. All of our peers (except Harvard) have eight or more class days after Thanksgiving. Berkeley, Stanford, and Yale go further with policies that shape the last week of class so that it maximizes learning and bridges nicely to the final exam period.

## **4. The Spring Semester: Issues, Tensions, and Improvements**

“February break serves no purpose because it is way too early.” That was perhaps the most commonly heard criticism of the current calendar when we started our work. We discovered that it is also a polarizing topic with many undergraduates and faculty on opposite sides of the fence.

How to end earlier in May is also controversial. Many faculty and graduate students like the long between-semester break for research-related reasons. International students enjoy the long break to travel home. Many undergraduates would like to have a longer summer for academic and job-related reasons.

At first glance, it would seem that a serious lengthening of the summer would have to come at the expense of the between-semester break.

The Spring Semester structure for the Modified Current Calendar and the Early Commencement Calendar address these tensions differently.

### *The Breaks*

The Modified Current Calendar keeps the two breaks but proposes a repositioning that is consistent with stress-related issues and the need to mitigate the effects of fractional weeks. It does this by staging the February break after 24 instructional days--fixed from year to year. Currently February break starts either 13 or 18 instructional days depending on where MLK day falls.

The Early Commencement Calendar does away with the 2-day break altogether. Those in favor of doing this regard the 2-day break as stress-inducer rather than a stress reducer. Coming so early in the term, it disrupts the flow of instruction. It should be noted that among peer schools, only Brown and Cornell have a two-break spring semester.

*Childcare Days in the Spring and the Modified Current Calendar*

A fringe benefit of the Current Calendar spring is that February break always coincides with the first two days of the week-long public school February break as both are pegged to President’s Day. This results in a two-day decrease in the number of childcare days.

The Modified Current Calendar positions the two breaks in the spring in a way that we think respects the academic flow of the semester:

24 class days – February Break – 23 class days – Spring Break – 22 class days

This scheduling disregards the public school President’s day break and leads us to consider using our 5-day spring break to reduce the number of childcare days. Unfortunately, coordinating our spring break with the public school spring break is problematic. Examination of the public school calendar for the past several years reveals that their spring break “touches” Easter weekend or Passover:

Year	Public School Spring Break	Passover	Easter
2011-12	April 6 – April 13	April 6 - April 14	April 5
2012-13	April 1 – April 5	March 25 – April 5	March 31
2013-14	April 14 – April 18	April 14 – April 22	April 20
2014-15	April 1 – April 3	April 3 – April 11	April 5
2015-16	April 25 – April 29	April 22 – April 30	March 27
2016-17	April 17 –April 21	April 10 – April 18	April 16
2017-18	March 26 – March 30	March 30 - April 7	April 1

Going forward ten years, here is a comparable table that compares the Modified Current Calendar spring break with Passover and Easter:

Year	M-Calendar Spring Break	Passover	Easter
2018-19	April 1 – April 5	April 19 - April 27	April 21
2019-20	March 31 – April 4	April 8 - April 16	April 12
2020-21	April 5 – April 9	March 27 - April 4	April 4
2021-22	April 4 – April 8	April 15 – April 23	April 17
2022-23	April 3 – April 7	April 5 – April 13	April 9
2023-24	April 1 – April 5	April 22 – April 30	April 31
2024-25	March 31 – April 4	April 12 – April 20	April 20
2025-26	March 30 – April 3	April 1 – April 9	April 5
2026-27	April 5 – April 9	April 21 - April 29	April 28
2027-28	April 3 – April 7	April 7 April 15	April 16

Assuming that the public schools continue to schedule their spring break as before, it would appear that our spring break may very well coincide with their spring break in 2021, 2023, 2026, and 2028.

It has been suggested that we have a “movable” spring break in order to increase the chance of spring break overlap for faculty and students who have school-age children. (Such a maneuver would not help the many staff who have to work over the spring semester breaks.) Delaying our spring break by one week would result in having just 17 post-break class days. Having spring break one week earlier would mean just 18 class days between the February and spring breaks. Neither of these reductions can be justified from the academic or student-stress point of view. Moreover, syllabus planning needs semester-to-semester consistency, especially in large lab courses. Calendar predictability is also an issue when it comes to making travel commitments and establishing the evening prelim schedule. The public schools typically announce their upcoming calendar in April.

For these reasons the Committee does not support the idea of having movable breaks that are determined by the public schools. The best we say about the Modified Current Calendar when it comes to the childcare issue is that it moves two childcare days from August to February. This is a modest improvement over the Current Calendar if you believe that pre-semester workloads in August are more intense than early-semester workloads in February.

#### *Childcare Days and the Early Commencement Calendar*

The Early Commencement Calendar has just a single one week break that is more or less half way between the February and April breaks in the public schools. The movable break idea is not a viable option for this calendar. The Early Commencement Calendar has exactly the same childcare properties as the Modified Current Calendar.

#### *Ending Earlier*

Because Ithaca College stages its commencement the weekend before Memorial Day weekend, we are faced with a stark choice. Either we leave graduation alone or we move it two weeks earlier in the year. (We briefly toyed with the idea of a weekday graduation, but decided that it was not a practical option.)

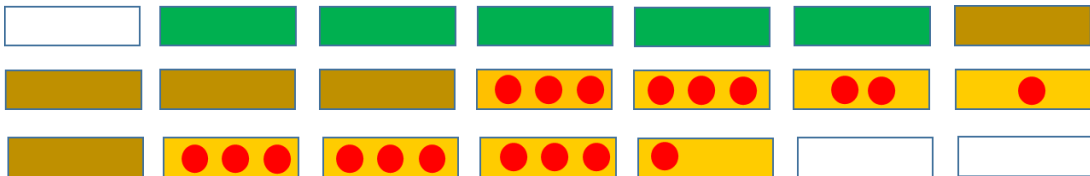
The Modified Current Calendar keeps graduation on the same weekend, but the final exam period ends a few days earlier and on a Saturday. This move, combined with a slightly later August start, increases the summer break by five days and one whole work week. It also means that events that are staged for graduating seniors do not have to conflict with study days and exam days, as is currently the case.

The Early Commencement Calendar moves graduation to the second weekend before Memorial Day weekend. If no other adjustments were made, this would imply a 2-week earlier start in January—a possibility strongly disliked by many faculty and graduate students. However, by doing away with February break the January start is pushed back by just 8 days.

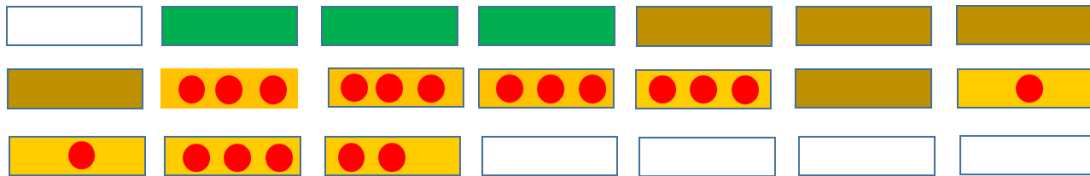
## 5. The Proposed 11-Day Study/Exam Period

The study/exam period associated with the Current Calendar (the C-Calendar) is thirteen days long and involves nineteen exam slots spread over eight exam days:

C-Fall:



C-Spring:



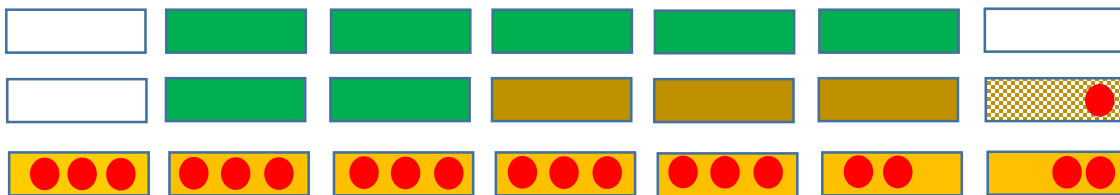
The Modified Current Calendar (the M-Calendar) and the Early Commencement Calendar (the E-Calendar) that we are proposing have an 11-day study exam period.

We have run simulations that confirm their feasibility. In particular, we have checked out the following Fall exam patterns for the M-Calendar:

M-19:



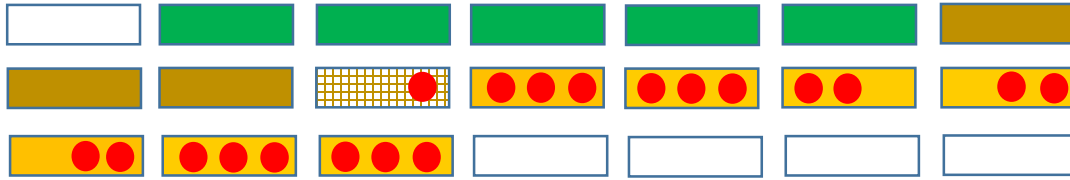
M-20:



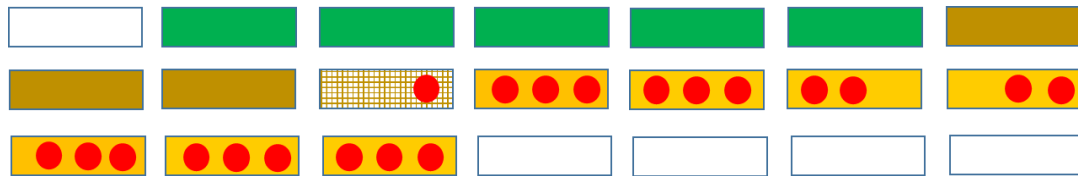
And we have checked out these Spring exam patterns for the E-Calendar:



E-19:



E-20:



Note that M-19 and M-20 also apply to the M-Calendar Spring and the E-calendar Fall.

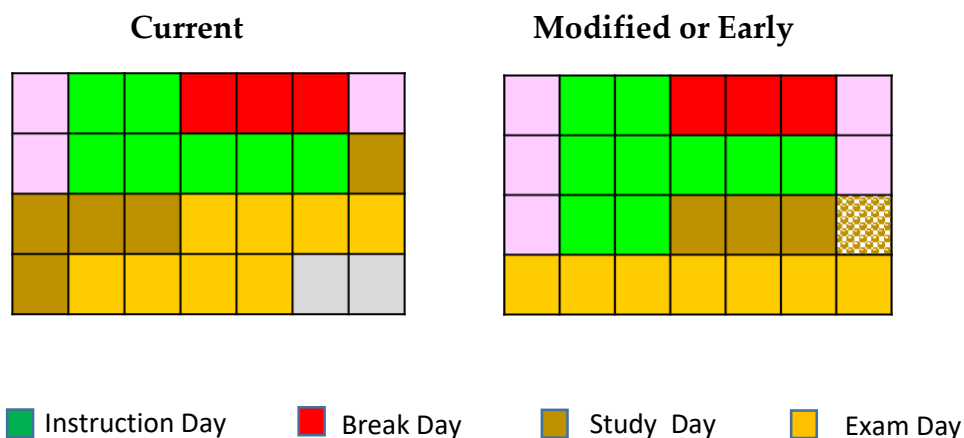
By “check out” we mean run a simulation that optimizes the mapping of courses to exam slots using real enrollment data, e.g., Spring 2016 data and Fall 2016 data. In a given optimization one basically sets out to minimize a chosen weighted sum of “bad things” that can happen during an exam period. Bad things include the number of 3-in-24 violations, the number of actual conflicts, the number of back-to-back exam instances, etc.

In a feasibility study carried out for the Committee, optimizations were expertly and independently explored by Professor Gary Thompson (School of Hotel Administration) and by Professor David Shmoys (School of Operations Research and Information Engineering). We are indebted to these faculty members for leading us to this conclusion:

Based on all the simulations that have been completed at the time of this writing, we conclude that the 11-day study/exam period works. Moreover, we believe that with carefully designed optimizations it will be possible to construct a study/exam period that is actually better than the one we have now as measured by all the usual metrics, e.g., the number of conflicts, the number of 3-in-24 hour violations, the number of back-to-backs. The scheduling software can also take into account big-course grading issues and specific concerns that apply to freshman.

Compression to an 11-day study/exam period is not a “radical move” compared to how our peers design their study/exam periods. (See Appendix 2.2). Nevertheless, everyone should be concerned about the possible effect of the compression on academic performance and student stress.

To address these concerns it is important NOT to think about the study/exam period in isolation. Far more insightful is to think about the study/exam period together with the preceding two weeks of class. Here is a fall semester depiction of this end-of-term period:



We believe that the last seven class days of the semester are made much more effective by having the two extra class days after Thanksgiving. New material taught just after the Thanksgiving break can be properly reviewed and integrated with earlier course content. Instead of ending classes with a 5-day frenzy, instructors can plan a course wrap-up that works well for students as they begin preparing for finals. Moreover, the weekend after Thanksgiving weekend gives students more time to complete end-of-term projects and papers.

With respect to the number of study days and the number of exam days, it will probably be necessary to have a single late-afternoon final exam slot on the first Saturday of the period in order to minimize the overall number of conflicts and back-to-back exams. (That is the cross-hatched Saturday tile above.) Even with slightly less than four full study days at the start, we feel that the new arrangement will induce less stress when the entire end-of-term structure is considered.

The above discussion carries over to the spring semester. Moreover, the fall and spring semesters end exactly the same way in the Modified Current Calendar. Thus, an enlightened end-of-semester strategy that exploits the last two class days can be applied both terms.

## 6. Process

Adopting a calendar based on surveys and numbers is like buying a house based on photographs and blueprints. It can work, but only if you have summer/fall/winter/spring snapshots taken from every possible angle and only if the plans capture the right dimensions. For the calendar, no one group can get the big picture by itself. Students, faculty, employees, and alumni must listen and learn from each other if the calendar is to be improved. The process we followed was consistent with that. It involved education, transparency, research, outreach, and voting.

## **Education**

During the past few months we held multiple campus town halls and information sessions that targeted undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, employees, and faculty. We talked to college advising centers, college career offices, various religious groups, Cornell Health, Cornell Police, Engaged Cornell, Global Cornell, and offices in Student and Campus Life. Off campus, we consulted the Ithaca Police, the Cayuga Medical Center, the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, and various local school districts.

## **Transparency**

A website was maintained that included the minutes of all our meetings and links to various resources that we found useful in our deliberations.

## **Research**

We are not alone when it comes to addressing calendar-related issues. In Appendix 2 we report how peer schools handle orientation and their study/exam period. We also compare their break patterns and the time they have between semesters and during the summer. The peer institutions that we consider are the Ivy Schools plus MIT, Duke, Johns Hopkins, Berkeley, Michigan, Stanford, and Chicago.

## **Outreach**

Last October we asked the community to respond to a set of thirteen calendar-related issues. Over 1000 responses were received and posted on the website. In Appendix 3 we provide summaries of the responses.

Based on these responses and our own research we developed two possible fall semester frameworks and four possible spring semester frameworks. We again turned to the community for advice asking our colleagues in March to compare the six possibilities with the semester calendars that are now in place. The results are presented in Appendix 4. We received well over 3000 responses and it is from those shared insights that we developed the Modified Current Calendar and the Early Commencement Calendar.

Our online efforts were not referenda. The surveys were designed to solicit points of view from each constituency. That is the only way to optimize for the overall good of the university.

## **Voting**

A preliminary version of this report was made available to the community in mid-April. The document was subsequently discussed in the Senate and in each of the Assemblies. Comments could be shared on the Committee website. In May, members of the Senate, the Student Assembly (SA), the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA), the Employee Assembly (EA), and the University Assembly

(UA) were asked to rank the three calendar options. Members of the Academic Calendar Committee and the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) were also asked to weigh in. Here are the results:

Choice			Assembly					Committee	
First	Second	Third	Senate	SA	GPSA	EA	UA	Calendar	EPC
Modified	Early	Current	15	5	2	2	4	5	5
Modified	Current	Early	44	17	10	9	11	7	1
Early	Modified	Current	22	2	2	7	3	4	3
Early	Current	Modified	1				1		
Current	Modified	Early	17		4	1	1		1
Current	Early	Modified	1		1				
Voted ->			100	24	19	19	20	16	10
Eligible ->			101	29	22	20	20	16	10

Across all constituencies and in both committees, there is a clear preference for the Modified Current Calendar.

**7. Other Recommendations**

AY 2017-18 should be used to “get ready” for the new calendar which will most likely be introduced during AY 2018-19. Here is a list of topics that need to be considered.

*Develop effective rules and academic guidelines for the end-of-semester class days and the study/exam period.*

We suggest that additional thought and guidance be given to the best academic use of the final days of instruction, study days and exam days.

*Promote the early availability of the final exam schedule.*

We recommend that the final exam schedule continue to be published before the start of the drop/add period. This will make end-of-semester travel easier to arrange and cheaper. Moreover, some students may want to take into account the final exam schedule when they “shop around” for courses to take.

*Seek faculty, student, and staff input on final exam scheduling.*

The 11-day exam period needs to be carefully designed with broad consultation about what features need to be optimized.

*Simplify the administration of final exams in general and extended time exams in particular.*

The number of students entitled to have extended time on an exam is about 700, approximately double what it was six years ago. We should look into ways that can simplify the administration of these exams.

*Rethink the final grade submission timeline and the academic actions timeline.*

Both proposed calendars would move fall exams closer to the winter holidays. Some changes in the timelines for grade submission (and their sequelae, such as student academic reviews) will be needed.

*Make it easier for students to request and obtain alternative exams for reasons of religious practice.*

Experiences across campus vary. We need clearer protocols and best-practice examples to guide the faculty.

*Think more about the role of exams and breaks and how they impact stress levels and academic performance.*

Consider reducing the length of final exams to two hours. Revisit the enforcement of the rules associated evening prelims and work-over-break.

*The Scheduling of Evening Prelims*

More attention needs to be paid to scheduling to avoid conflicts and other “bad things.”

*Orientation*

If an expanded orientation period is adopted, then careful thought must go into its design. New students need to be advised about academic integrity, bias, free speech, grading, and other important issues. At the same time, information overload needs to be avoided

*Slope Day*

The scheduling of Slope Day needs to be revisited. There also needs to be a careful, broad-community discussion about the time of day when the event starts and whether or not it should be staged on the last day of classes.

*Prepare for weekday renaming if necessary*

An ideal calendar would have equal numbers of each weekday for instruction, to facilitate labs and equalize instruction across various class schedules (MWF; Tu/Th, etc.) The Modified Current and Early Commencement calendars come as close as possible to this given that the fall and spring semesters have 68 and 69 class days respectively. On the other hand, the current calendar has significant weekday imbalance which should be addressed through the well-known practice of weekday renaming.

*Recommend that the published calendar recognizes Indigenous Peoples’ Day.*

We support the SA and Senate resolutions that call for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ Day on the academic calendar. See Appendix 7.

*Periodic Review*

We recommend that the academic calendar be reviewed every five years. The scope of the review should be defined by the extent of “calendar unhappiness.”

## Appendix 1. The Charge

All aspects of the academic calendar should be reviewed as specified by Senate Resolution 96. In suggesting improvements, the Committee should build upon the extensive research of the 2010 Calendar Committee. It is especially important for the Committee to address two fundamental concerns that many in the community share about the current calendar:

1. Breaks and Study Days. Are they optimally positioned from the standpoint of bringing out the best in our students?
2. Spring Semester Start. Does it make sense to start earlier in order to create more summertime employment and academic opportunities for students?

The analysis of these issues must take into consideration the effect upon faculty and employees. Proposed changes must be well reasoned and (if possible) backed up with scientific data. If Commencement is moved, then its impact on families and on related events such as the Convocation must be fully understood.

Broad consultation is essential. The Committee will solicit the concerns and suggestions of

- Undergraduate Students (especially via the SA representatives on the Committee)
- Graduate Students (especially via the GPSA representative on the Committee)
- Employees (especially via the EA representative on the Committee)
- Faculty (especially via their Senator(s)).
- Every Academic Dean
- Every Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education
- Every Director of Undergraduate Studies
- Center for Intercultural Dialog
- International Student and Scholars Office
- The Commencement Office
- Career Services
- Cornell Health
- The Office of Faculty Development and Diversity
- Local municipalities and school districts
- Ithaca College and other nearby institutions

The Committee is also charged with making a recommendation with respect to SA Resolution 46 (Creation of an Indigenous Peoples' Day).

All modifications to the calendar must respect the economic and cultural diversity of the student population.

## Appendix 2. Comparison with Peer Institution Calendars

It is instructive to look at the properties of the calendars put together by our peers. We tabulate how they handle orientation, study/exam periods, length-of-summer, and breaks.

### A2.1 Orientation Periods

School	Style	Ugrads	Grads	Length	What it Looks Like
<a href="#">Cornell</a>	Semesters	14300	7400		
Current				3	Sat-Sun-Mon
Modified				5	Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed
Early				5	Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed
<a href="#">UPenn</a>	Semesters	11500	13300	5	Thu-Fr-Sat-Sun-Mon
<a href="#">Columbia</a>	Semesters	8100	19500	9	Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun-Mon
<a href="#">Harvard</a>	Semesters	15200	6700	7	Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue
<a href="#">Yale</a>	Semesters	5500	6900	6	Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue-Sat-Sun
<a href="#">Princeton</a>	Semesters	2700	5400	10	Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue
<a href="#">Brown</a>	Semesters	6300	2200	8	Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun
<a href="#">Dartmouth</a>	Quarters	4300	2100	6	Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun
<a href="#">U Chicago</a>	Quarters	5500	9900	9	Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun
<a href="#">Stanford</a>	Quarters	7000	9300	6	Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun
<a href="#">MIT</a>	Semesters	11400	6900	8	Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun
<a href="#">Johns Hopkins</a>	Semesters	6500	14900	5	Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue-Wed
<a href="#">Duke</a>	Semesters	6600	8200	5	Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun
<a href="#">Berkeley</a>	Semesters	27100	11100	8	Tue-Wed-Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun-Mon-Tue
<a href="#">U Michigan</a>	Semesters	28300	16400	5	Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun-Mon

### Notes

Although some schools have serious new-student activity on move-in day, we do NOT count move-in day as an orientation day in the above table. Orientation days that are also weekdays are more attractive to staff and faculty.

## A2.2 Study/Exam Periods

School	Style	Ugrads	Grads	Study Days	Exam Days	Exam Periods	Exam Length
Cornell	Semesters	14300	7400				
Current				5	8	19	2.5
Modified				3+	7+	?	2.5
Early				3+	7+	?	2.5
Penn	Semesters	11500	13300	4	6	24	2
Columbia	Semesters	8100	19500	5	5	20	3
Harvard	Semesters	15200	6700	7	11	22	3
Yale	Semesters	5500	6900	5+	7	16	3
Princeton	Semesters	2700	5400	11	10	21	3?
Brown	Semesters	6300	2200	5	9	18	3?
Dartmouth	Quarters	4300	2100	1	5	13	2
Chicago	Quarters	5500	9900	4	5	19	2
Stanford	Quarters	7000	9300	2+	5	20	3
MIT	Semesters	11400	6900	3	5	9	3
Johns Hopkins	Semesters	6500	14900	5	8	17	3
Duke	Semesters	6600	8200	4	6	16	3
Berkeley	Semesters	27100	11100	2+	5	20	3
Michigan	Semesters	28300	16400	4	6	20	2

### Notes

This information was gleaned from the “academic calendar” webpages maintained by the schools. It is sometimes not obvious what counts for a study day. Thus, the numbers, while generally correct, may be subject to off-by-one errors.



## A2.3 Between-Semester Break Length and Summer Break Length

School	Style	Fall Start	Last Exam	Dec-Jan Days	Spring Start	Last Exam	Senior Days	Graduation Day	Summer Length
Cornell	Semesters								
Current		Aug 23	Dec 15	40	Jan 25	May 23	4	May 28	90
Modified		Aug 25	Dec 17	37	Jan 24	May 20	7	May 28	95
Early		Aug 25	Dec 17	30	Jan 17	May 9	4	May 14	106
Penn	Semesters	Aug 30	Dec 22	19	Jan 11	May 9	5	May 15	111
Columbia	Semesters	Sept 6	Dec 23	24	Jan 17	May 12	4	May 17	115
Harvard	Semesters	Aug 31	Dec 20	33	Jan 23	May 13	11	May 25	108
Yale	Semesters	Aug 31	Dec 21	29	Jan 20	May 10	11	May 22	110
Princeton*	Semesters					May 26	9	June 5	108
Brown	Semesters	Sept 7	Dec 21	34	Jan 25	May 19	8	May 28	110
Dartmouth	Quarters					June 5	5	June 11	97
Chicago	Quarters					June 9	0	June 10	106
Stanford	Quarters					June 14	3	June 18	103
MIT	Semesters	Sept 7	Dec 22	46	Feb 7	May 26	13	June 13	102
Johns Hopkins	Semesters	Aug 31	Dec 19	34	Jan 23	May 18	5	May 24	115
Duke	Semesters	Aug 29	Dec 19	22	Jan 11	May 6	5	May 12	113
Berkeley	Semesters	Aug 24	Dec 16	31	Jan 17	May 12	0	May 13	102
Michigan	Semesters	Sept 6	Dec 22	12	Jan 4	April 27	2	April 30	130

### Notes

The data in the table is based on AY 2016-17.

A “Senior Day” is a day in between the last exam day and Commencement.

\* Princeton’s Fall semester ends in January

\*\*For schools on the quarter system it does not make sense to talk about the length of the between-semester break.

## A2.4 The Breaks

School	Style	Fall Break Length	Thanksgiving Break Length	Post Thanksgiving Class Days	Spring Break Lengths
Cornell	Semesters				
Current		2	3	5	2+5
Modified		2	3	7	2+5
Early		2	3	7	5
Penn	Semesters	2	2	11	5
Columbia	Semesters	2	2	11	5
Harvard	Semesters	1	3	5	5
Yale	Semesters	3	5	10	10
Princeton	Semesters	5	3	15*	5
Brown	Semesters	1	3	8	2+5
Dartmouth	Quarters				
Chicago	Quarters				
Stanford	Quarters				
MIT	Semesters	2	2	13	5
Johns Hopkins	Semesters	1	5	10	5
Duke	Semesters	2	3	10	5
Berkeley	Semesters	1	3	8	5
Michigan	Semesters	2	2	12	5

### Notes

The notation "2+5" means one break with length 2 days and a second break with length 5 days.

One-day holidays (Labor Day, Indigenous People's Day, Veteran's Day, MLK Day, and President's Day) are not counted as breaks.

### **Appendix 3. Community Discussion of Calendar-Related Issues**

The community posted over 1000 comments that related to specific calendar issues. Here is a summary of the major concerns that were identified by this process.

#### **The Fall Semester Start**

Every Cornell class day before Labor Day poses a day care issue for faculty and staff with school-age children. How students use August (jobs, internships, time with family) argues for a later start. The volume of instruction (68 class days) cannot be reduced because of NY state regulations. Thus, if we start later then possible implications include (a) a shortened final exam period. (b) an exam period that ends closer to Christmas and (c) reducing Fall break to 1 or 0 days.

#### **The October Break**

The timing of the Fall break is good when considering the prelim cycle and the need to split the Labor Day-Thanksgiving interval. The Fall break is also a local school break. There is disappointment that it does not generally synchronize with the Jewish holidays. There is some willingness to sacrifice Fall break in order to have a full week at Thanksgiving.

#### **The Thanksgiving Break**

Staff should get the preceding Wednesday off. Strong sentiment to make it a weeklong break as the Monday and Tuesday are devalued because of very low attendance. It may be necessary to have two weeks of class after a week-long Thanksgiving break, partly because the total number of class days cannot be reduced and partly because it is hard to teach new content on a 5-day “island” that is positioned at the very end of the semester. Even with a week-long Thanksgiving break, some students cannot go home because of financial reasons.

#### **The Fall Semester End**

This issue is tightly coupled to the issue of when we start the Fall semester and the length of the Fall and Thanksgiving break. Ending later can create holiday travel problems and grading-till-Christmas problems. All things considered, many feel that ending a few days later would be an OK price to pay for a later semester start and a serious post-thanksgiving class period. Ending later does not appeal to those who cannot go home over Thanksgiving.

#### **The Spring Semester Start**

Among our peers, we have one of the longest between-semester breaks. Those who see this as a positive cite that it creates valuable time for research, proposal writing, field work, and conferences. It also makes it possible for faculty, TAs, and students to prep for spring courses. Other reasons against starting earlier in January include building maintenance, office staff work associated with wrapping up the Fall semester, and international student travel.

Undergraduates generally favor a shorter break if it implies ending earlier in May. Also, the social value of the break doesn't require 5-6 weeks. Starting one week earlier is a suggested compromise. Grad student stipends are correlated with the start and finish of the semesters. Important to pay attention to this detail if those dates are modified.

### **The February Break**

Nobody likes the position of the February break except those who value coordination with the local schools. Many favor doing away with it altogether and returning to a single-break spring semester. Fractional weeks a.k.a. 2-day breaks disrupt the academic flow and impose difficult travel constraints, both of which increase stress. Enforcing a "no university business" rule might increase its value. Some feeling among those who favor a 2-break spring semester that the longer one should come first. The staff do not get Presidents Day off.

### **The Spring Break**

The current spring break is forced to be late because of February break. Some feel that we should either do away with February break and return to the single break idea or that we should swap the order of the two breaks staging the week long break in early-to mid-March where it has increased value. Other thoughts about repositioning the 1-week break cite stress-relief, coordination with local school breaks and coordination with religious holidays. There is a "schedule-this-after-spring-break" mentality. This gets disruptive the later one stages spring break.

### **The Spring Semester End**

Internships and summer employment is essential for many, many undergraduates. The late summer start and shortened summer disadvantage Cornell students. Summer stipends for graduate students are not routine so care has to be exercised should the summer period be lengthened.

### **The New-Student Orientation Period**

The current calendar reduced the amount of time allocated to orientation programs. Consensus appears to be that the reduction was too extreme and that one or two days should be added to the orientation period. We currently have the shortest orientation when compared to our peers.

There are Friday night/weekend-related issues because of religious concerns and faculty-with-family concerns. Orientation involves new graduate students too and the message is the same: the current orientation period is just too short. The short orientation period belittles the advising process and good advising impacts student stress.

### **The Study/Exam Period**

Strong preference of publishing the final exam schedule before the start of the drop-add period, i.e., before the first day of class. There are two competing big course issues. There needs to be enough time to finish grading big courses before the exam period ends. This suggests that big courses should have their exams early in the period. However, frontloading the exam period with big-course finals

disadvantages freshman and sophomores who typically populate the big courses. So care has to be exercised.

There are several weekend exam day issues. These revolve around religious practice concerns and childcare concerns. There is also a “biorhythm”, weekend psychology that we are all used to. It says “take it easy on Saturday and Sunday.”

The conflict issue. The number of exam days and the number of exam time slots needs to be examined as there seems to be a longing for the “old way” of scheduling exams.

We need to ask the question, why does Cornell require more exam days than is typically the case among its peers? Courses without final exams may have big “last assignments” and “course projects.” How should this be factored into our exam-period thinking?

Having finals end midweek creates a “fractional week” issue with the summer. By certain standards, the length of the summer is measured in terms of number of whole weeks rather than the number of days. It is also easier for parents to pick up their kid on the weekend rather than midweek.

### **The Senior Days Issue**

Those who do not like to have a long gap between the last exam and graduation cite (a) an anxiousness to get on with summertime jobs and research and (b) the idea that the Senior Days period sets students up for bad behavior related to alcohol. On the other hand, some think that a properly organized Senior Day period can be an affordable and very positive experience for the vast majority of students. It is pointed out that Seniors tend to have fewer final exams so in fact “Senior Week” is really more than just those empty days between the last exam and Commencement.

### **Having Commencement on Memorial Day Weekend**

The staff do not like working on Memorial Day weekend—keeps them from their families on a major holiday. Moving Commencement to a 2-day weekend has financial implications for a travelling family. Some interest in shortening the festivities by doing away with Convocation. Travel on the busy Memorial Day weekend is harder and more expensive than on a normal weekend. Faculty attendance would be better if graduation was staged earlier.

### **Synching with Local School Calendars**

Clearly a major issue for the hundreds of faculty and staff with school-age children. However, there are difficulties associated with coordinating with local school calendars. The public school spring break comes far too late in April for there to be overlap with our spring break. Local schools have NYS testing constraints that torque their calendars so they are not exactly free to compromise with us.

**Appendix 4. Community Discussion of Possible Calendar Frameworks**

Based on the community input detailed above and our own research, we devised two possible fall calendar frameworks and four possible spring calendar frameworks. In an effort to see how the community would go about balancing trade-offs, we floated a qualtrics survey and received over 3000 responses. Below are descriptions of these frameworks and a summary of the community’s reactions to them. The alumni respondents are typically 2014, 2015, and 2016 graduates. We contacted that group because they have experience with both the current calendar and its predecessor.

The entries in the tables below are percents.

**Fall Calendar Framework F1**

This framework moves four August class days to December, has a 3-day Thanksgiving break, and a finals period with 4 study days and 7 exam days.

The survey asked if F1 is better than the current fall calendar.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Undergrad	31.7	55.4	12.9
Grad	43.1	42.4	14.5
Staff	57.2	18.7	24.1
Faculty	70.1	17.0	12.9
Alumni	27.2	57.2	15.6

**Fall Calendar Framework F2**

This framework moves two August class days to December and has 4-day orientation period, a 5-day Thanksgiving break, and a finals period with 4 study days and 7 exam days.

The survey asked if F2 is better than the current fall calendar.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Undergrad	51.4	34.3	14.3
Grad	51.5	31.8	16.7
Staff	49.1	26.7	24.2
Faculty	39.5	41.3	19.2
Alumni	38.2	45.6	16.2

### Spring Calendar Framework S1

This framework is basically the same as the current spring calendar except that February break is delayed by one week and it has a finals period with 4 study days and 7 exam days.

The survey asked if S1 is better than the current spring calendar.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Undergrad	37.5	38.5	24.0
Grad	41.2	30.6	28.2
Staff	30.7	36.7	32.6
Faculty	29.4	41.3	29.3
Alumni	49.7	26.5	23.8

### Spring Calendar Framework S2

This framework is basically the same as the current spring calendar except that the 5-day break comes before the 2-day break February break and it has a finals period with 4 study days and 7 exam days.

The survey asked if S2 is better than the current spring calendar.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Undergrad	30.1	53.7	15.2
Grad	40.1	46.3	13.6
Staff	38.7	31.6	29.7
Faculty	35.6	31.6	29.8
Alumni	28.5	56.7	14.4

### Spring Calendar Framework S3

This framework is essentially the same as the current spring calendar except that everything (including Commencement) is two weeks earlier. It has a finals period with 4 study days and 7 exam days.

The survey asked if S3 is better than the current spring calendar.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Undergrad	52.8	34.9	12.3
Grad	40.1	46.3	13.6
Staff	47.2	33.0	19.8
Faculty	27.0	59.5	13.5
Alumni	28.8	56.7	14.4

### Spring Calendar Framework S4

This framework stages commencement two weeks earlier and has no February break. It has a finals period with 4 study days and 7 exam days. Classes start in January eight days earlier than is the case with the current spring calendar.

The survey asked if S4 is better than the current spring calendar.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Undergrad	29.3	58.9	11.8
Grad	29.1	59.0	11.9
Staff	44.1	37.1	18.8
Faculty	36.8	49.0	14.2
Alumni	15.6	71.8	13.6



## Appendix 5. The 1-2-3 Ranking Ballot

The Faculty Senate and the Assemblies were asked to communicate their calendar preferences to the Committee by having their voting members provide a strict ranking of the three possibilities.

<p>1      2      3</p>	<p><b>Current Calendar Framework</b></p> <p>It features a 3-day orientation, a 2-day October break, a 3-day Thanksgiving break, 5 class days after Thanksgiving, a 2-day February break, a 5-day spring break, a 13-day finals period with 8 exam days, and 4 days between the last day of exams and Commencement. Commencement is held on Memorial Day Weekend.</p>
<p>1      2      3</p>	<p><b>Modified Current Calendar Framework</b></p> <p>Similar to the Current Calendar except that it has a 5-day orientation, 7 class days after Thanksgiving, repositioned spring-semester breaks, and an 11-day finals period with 7+ exam days. Compared to the Current Calendar, the summer break is 5 days longer and the between-semester break is 3 days shorter. In the Spring semester there are 7 days between the last day of exams and Commencement. Commencement is held on Memorial Day Weekend.</p>
<p>1      2      3</p>	<p><b>Early Commencement Calendar Framework</b></p> <p>Similar to the Current Calendar except that it has a 5-day orientation, 7 class days after Thanksgiving, a single 5-day break in the spring semester, and an 11-day finals period with 7+ exam days. Compared to the Current Calendar, the summer break is about 15 days longer and the between-semester break is about 10 days shorter. In the Spring semester there are 4 days between the last day of exams and Commencement. Commencement is held two weeks before Memorial Day Weekend.</p>

Voters could also attach comments to their ballots should they wish to communicate additional information.

## **Appendix 6. Comments from the Committee**

Committee members were invited to share their own views of the calendar options and ranking.

### **Marianella Casasola (Faculty)**

I think both revised calendars are an improvement over the current calendar although I favor the modified calendar.

First, the modified calendar adds an additional day to orientation. Second, starting later in August reduces the number of child care days with the added bonus of adding more instructional days after Thanksgiving. These extra days makes it easier to end the semester in a more academically productive manner than the current calendar. Although I find the extended January break to be highly conducive for research, I think that starting the semester one-week earlier offers an academic advantage to students over the current calendar. Finally, I like the balance in how the breaks are distributed across both semesters.

The early commencement calendar, for me, starts too early in January and I worry that 8 weeks of classes prior to a break may be too taxing (that is, I worry about the absence of a February break from both an academic and health perspective).

### **Marin Clarkberg (Institutional Research and Planning)**

I was convinced by the weather concern, actually. For a variety of reasons (including Seasonal Affective Disorder and winter travel delays that affect not just students but the feasibility of having guests to campus in the first half of spring), I just don't think it makes sense to have more of the school year take place in the heart of winter.

### **Betsy East (Associate Dean for Student Services, Engineering)**

The modified current calendar makes some important changes to the current calendar including regaining a day for orientation, having a full 7 days after T-giving for classes, adding a work week to the summer while still maintaining a substantial winter break. I believe the substantial winter break is important for all students but particularly for international students who may go home only once during the year as they often stay here to do internships or research. If we had the option of moving graduation 1 week earlier, I would prefer that, but the early calendar that moves it two weeks earlier condenses the spring semester too much with too few breaks for the students.

**Greg Eells (Cornell Health)**

The modified calendar framework seems to make reasonable changes without being as disruptive.

**Tom Fox (Faculty)**

I most prefer the early calendar because it gives us everything we need from an academic stand point and creates the longest uninterrupted period for non-course academic activities for faculty and work/internship possibilities for students. While it gives us a relatively early graduation date, it is still within the range of our peer institutions, and this reduces the number of exam-free senior days. The introduction of February break in the current calendar has not proven to be an improvement academically or otherwise, a view apparently supported by the vast majority of our peer institutions. I see its elimination in the early calendar as a plus.

The modified calendar is my second choice because it extends the length of summer break for faculty and for those students who are not graduating.

**Connie Mabry (Commencement Office)**

Modified matches the fall semester with similar number of study/exam days being consistent.

Early affects so many changes during winter break and start of spring that are monumental compared to the reasons/rational for making it so early.

**Gina Giambattista (Office of the Assemblies)**

We heard overwhelmingly from staff that they would appreciate having the long weekend at the end of the academic year. Keeping the 'academic mission' as the focus and guiding objective, the only substantive differences between Early Commencement and Modified are the truncated winter break, and elimination of the February break... the affect being a longer summer and a "giveback" of the long weekend (Memorial Day).

Additionally, the peer institution data are compelling - most of our peers successfully manage to turn in grades, get substantial research done, and make good use of a three-week winter break.

**Akhilesh Issur (Undergraduate Student)**

During my time serving on the Academic Calendar Committee, I reached out to various constituencies of the undergraduate student population: athletes, Greek life members, international students, low-

income students, etc. It seemed to me that most of these constituencies would strongly favor the Modified Calendar Framework.

Here are the reasons why I strongly support Modified Calendar Framework:

1. Most international students only go home during winter break, because during the summer, they are doing internships in the U.S., or research on campus. Shortening the break would really affect the number of days they can spend with their family back home. It is hard for many international students to go home twice during the year too, so even if they have some time during summer after/before their internship and research endeavors, they might not be able to afford the expensive airfare.
2. Members of IFC fraternities and PHC sororities already come back 8-10 days before the start of classes in the spring. The shorter winter break - which is only 3 weeks for half of the number of years - would mean they would get to spend less than 2 weeks at home. This will discourage many people to rush. It is important to note that every member of Greek life is expected to be back for rush (not only freshmen who rush themselves), so we are really talking about a significant number of students here. Many chapters fine their members who miss rush. Moreover, rushing remains an integral part of the Cornell experience, and while it is not academic, it definitely impact academics in many ways. I believe there will be cases where rush will be extended to the first or even second week of school with the Early Commencement Framework, which is highly problematic (given that pledging is also supposed to only be 4 weeks).
3. Low-income students who live far away (such as in California or Florida) face the same problem as international students when it comes to the shortened winter break.
4. February break is important. While it is hard to prove its impact, most student assembly members think it is valuable. The only problem with the current calendar is that it is too early. This problem is fixed with Modified Current Calendar. I don't think it is healthy for Cornell students to go 7-8 week straight without a break. I personally have always needed February break to refresh.
5. There has been good conversation to improve on the affordability and variety of activities during Senior days to prevent binge drinking. Currently, Senior Days events extend throughout exam period already, so having 5 days of Senior days would actually help with academics by not having these events during exams. The administration has agreed to keep one dining hall open during senior days for low income students who need swipes.
6. There are lots of winter break opportunities: externships, less competitive internships, winter classes abroad, lots of volunteer opportunities abroad, project team work. Reducing winter will severely impact on these, perhaps making them impossible in many cases.

### **Ben Oster (Undergraduate Student)**

As a representative of the students, I must convey how starting the semester two weeks early is going to create significant problems. For many students who live far away (include those outside the country), the winter intersession is the only break where they may travel home. Shortening this break drastically will cut into these student's time with their families.

Additionally, this will force student who come back to both partake in rush and host rush to come back earlier in January. With the Early commencement framework, Rush week could start as early as Jan 5th, forcing students to come back after an incredibly short break. This will act to deter people rushing and possibly force students to rush only in their second year, not their first year. Besides drastically changing this community, this will additionally exacerbate the housing shortage we currently have for upper level students.

The February Break was put in place to remove stress. With the early calendar framework, students will go a full 8 weeks without a break. This point was strongly discussed by the Student Assembly, which voted strongly in favor of the modified calendar.

### **Rebecca Stoltzfus (Faculty)**

I am very pleased to support either the early commencement or the modified calendar. The improvements made the fall calendar (same in both) are significant improvements over the current calendar.

The early and modified calendars offer significant tradeoffs. I ranked the early commencement first because I value the longer summer, which I think could open up significant opportunities for academic innovations in the summer for our students in the longer term. We could develop options for students to take a full semester of work in the summer, with financial aid, possibly creating more flexibility for graduate student TA-ships, faculty teaching/research schedules, and students who need an extra semester or would like to graduate early. However, I value the modified calendar because it preserves the lengthy mid-semester break, which I have enjoyed as a faculty member, and is valuable to graduate students' research endeavors. On balance, when I consider benchmark data from peers with short mid-semester breaks, I am swayed toward the early commencement calendar.

### **Rob Thorne (Faculty)**

Modified calendar framework is best, but:

In 2019, 2020, 2025, 2026 Winter break is 30 days - good, exams end by May 18 - ok, and summer break is 102 days or 14 weeks - good for student employment, etc. In all these years, class starts the day after MLK day.

BUT: in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, winter break is 37 days - too long!, exams end as late as May 22 - too late! - and summer break is only 95 days - too short! In all these years, class starts a week after MLK day.

It would be more sensible in every way to always start the semester the day after MLK day. This would fix the duration of winter break at 30 days, fix the length of summer at 14 weeks (with an occasional 15 weeks), and ensure that exams would be done no later than May 18, close to when faculty and TA appointments end (May 15).

The only issue here is that this would increase the time from end of exams to graduation to two weeks in those years. I can't believe that, with planning between now and 2021, we can't find a way to manage that two week period. There are so many benefits to fixing the semester start, that the potential costs of a longer "senior week" in half of the years can't possibly outweigh them.

### **Charles Van Loan (Faculty)**

The expanded orientation period, having seven class days after Thanksgiving, and the 11-day study/exam period tell me that the current calendar is vastly inferior to the other two.

The Modified Current Calendar Framework with its 1-week longer summer break and slightly shorter winter break is a positive compromise for those who care about summer jobs opportunities for students AND who care about winter break research opportunities for faculty and others. That is why I prefer the Modified Current Calendar to the Early Commencement Calendar. However, I think everybody would adapt to the latter and if we go that route, then the longer summer break would certainly be attractive. So I would not be unhappy with the early Commencement option.

## Appendix 7. Indigenous Peoples’ Day

The Committee was asked to respond to SA Resolution 46 , a recommendation that the academic calendar identify the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Senate Resolution 126 voices support for this idea.

We recommend that the academic calendar webpage be modified accordingly and offer the following before-and-after example:

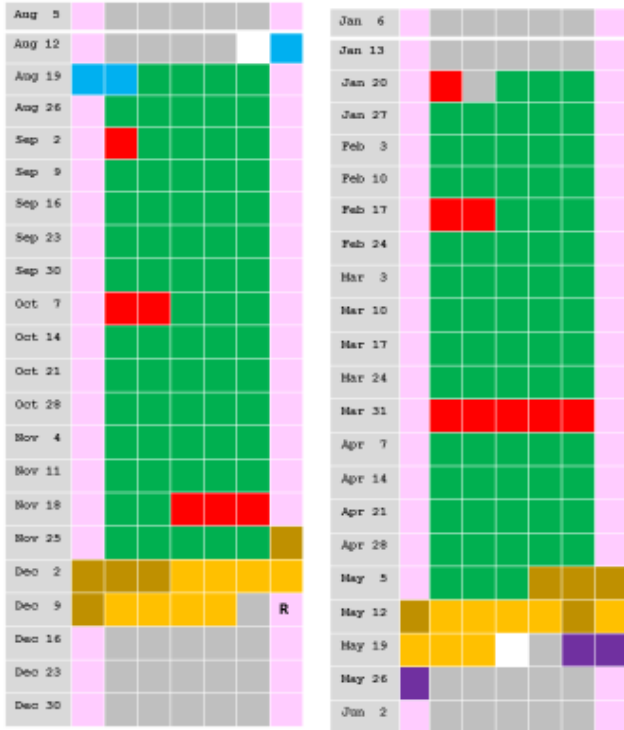
What the Current Fall Calendar Looks Like		
Residence Halls Open	Friday	August 19
Instruction Begins	Tuesday	August 23
Labor Day-No Classes	Monday	September 5
Fall Break begins	Saturday	October 8
Instruction Resumes	Wednesday	October 12
Thanksgiving Recess Begins	Wednesday	November 23
Instruction Resumes	Monday	November 28
Last Day of Classes	Friday	December 2
Study Period	Saturday-Tuesday	December 3-6
Scheduled Exams	Wednesday-Thursday	December 7-15

What an Amended Calendar Might Look Like		
Residence Halls Open	Friday	August 19
First Day of Classes	Tuesday	August 23
Labor Day—no classes	Monday	September 5
Fall Break	Monday-Tuesday	October 10-11
Indigenous Peoples Day	Monday	October 10
Veteran’s Day—classes held	Friday	November 11
Thanksgiving Break	Wednesday-Friday	November 23-25
Last Day of Classes	Friday	December 2
Study Period	Saturday-Tuesday	December 3-6
Scheduled Exams	Wednesday-Thursday	December 7-15

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# Appendix 8. The Current Calendar Through 2027-28

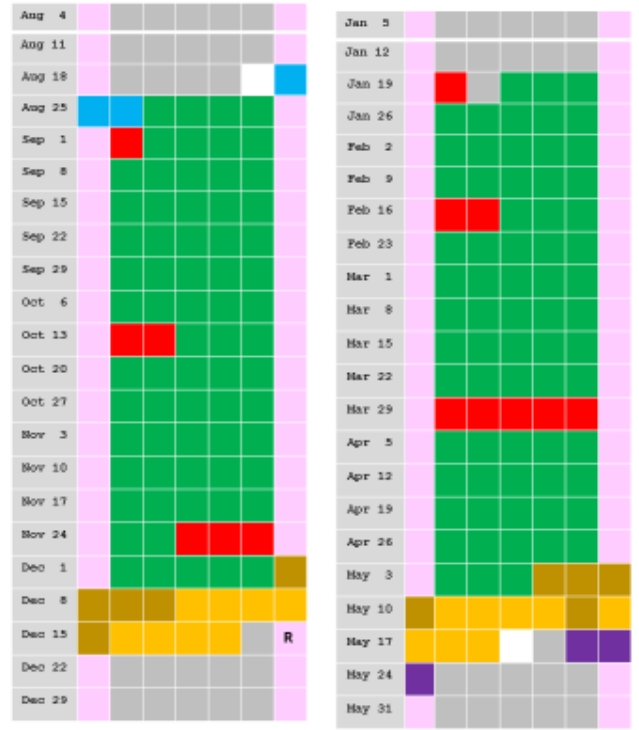
## 2018-19: Current Calendar



Between Semester Days = 40

Summer Days = 97  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

## 2019-20: Current Calendar

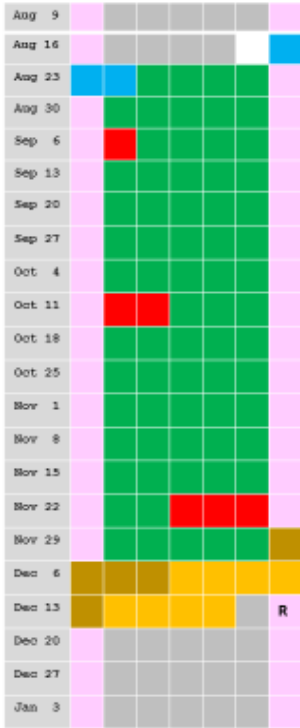


Between Semester Days = 33

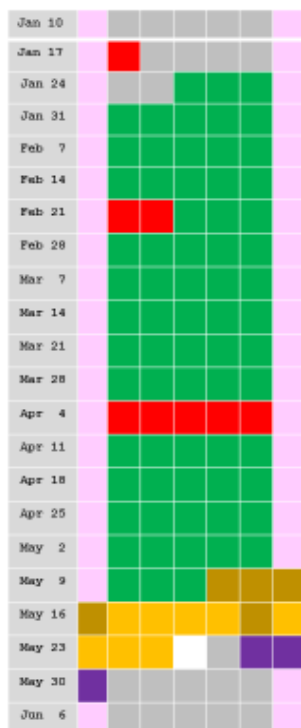
Summer Days = 97  
Summer Work Weeks = 13



## 2020-21: Current Calendar

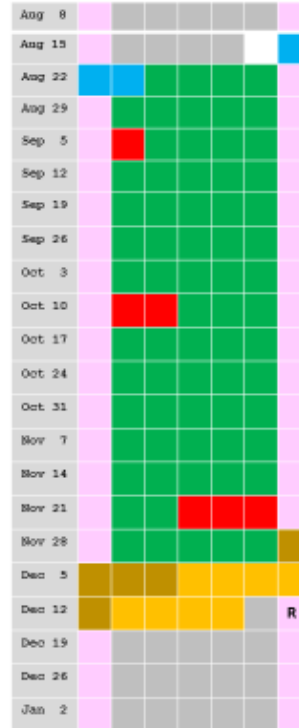


Between Semester Days = 40

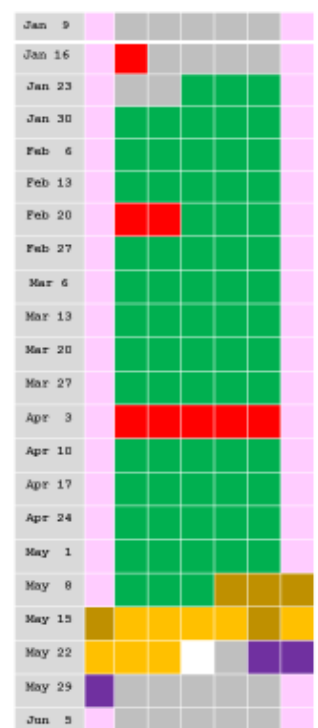


Summer Days = 90  
Summer Work Weeks = 12

## 2021-22: Current Calendar

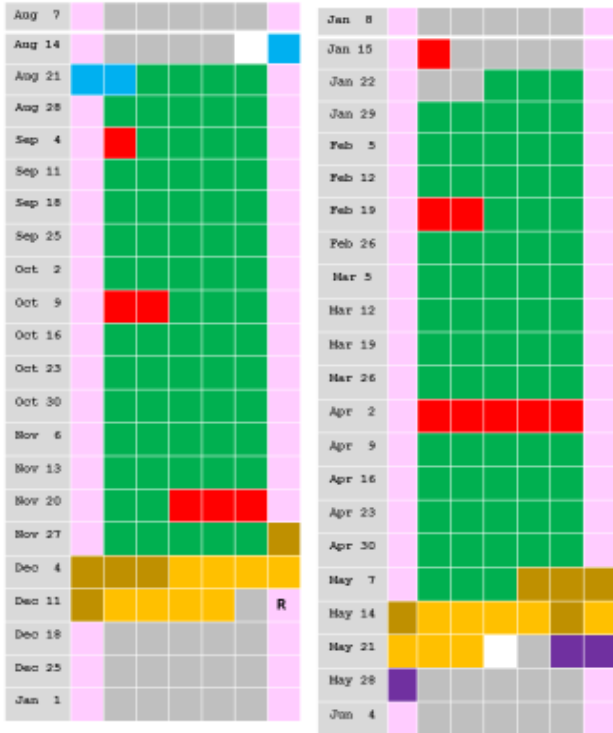


Between Semester Days = 40



Summer Days = 90  
Summer Work Weeks = 12

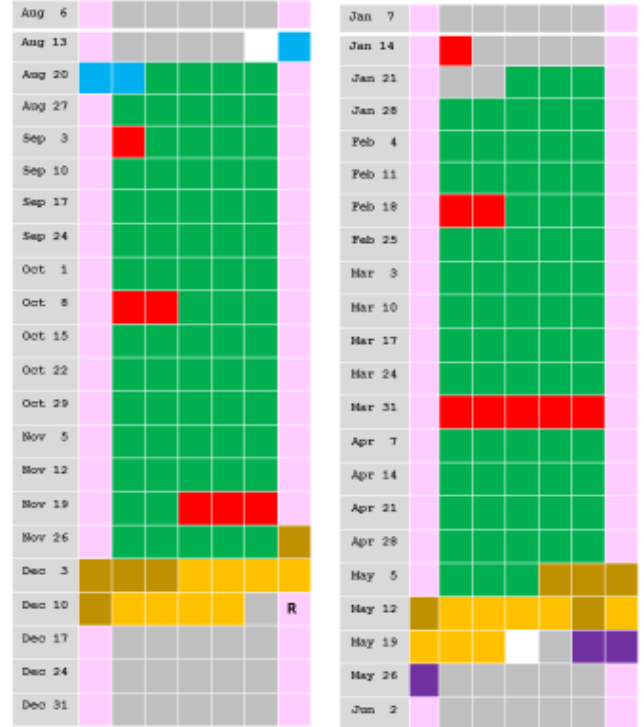
## 2022-23: Current Calendar



Between Semester Days = 40

Summer Days = 90  
Summer Work Weeks = 12

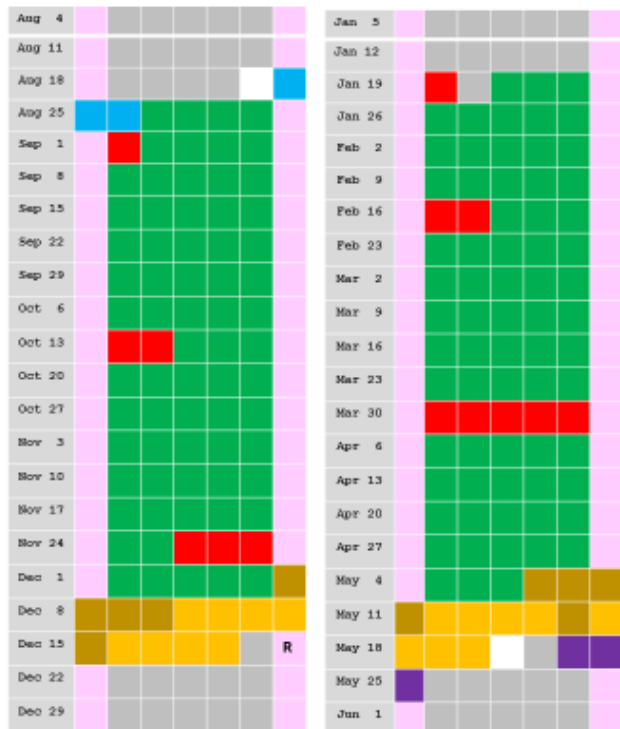
## 2023-24: Current Calendar



Between Semester Days = 40

Summer Days = 97  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

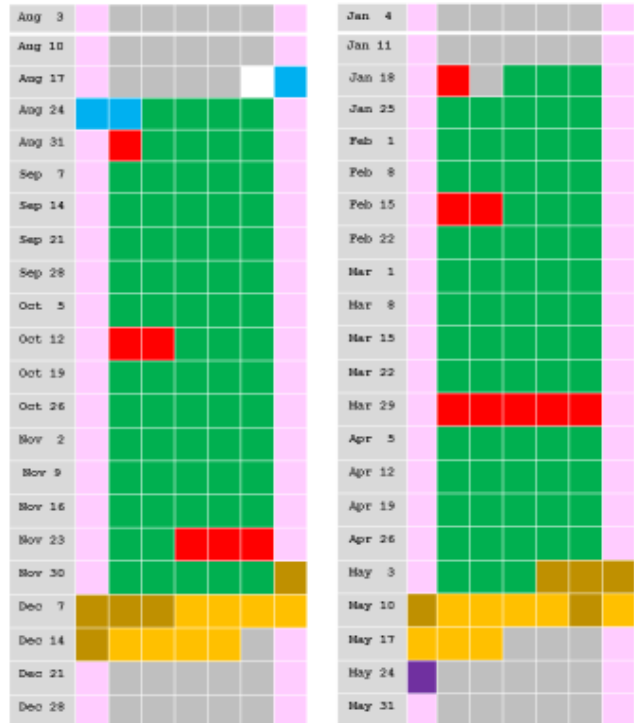
## 2024-25: Current Calendar



Between Semester Days = 33

Summer Days = 97  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

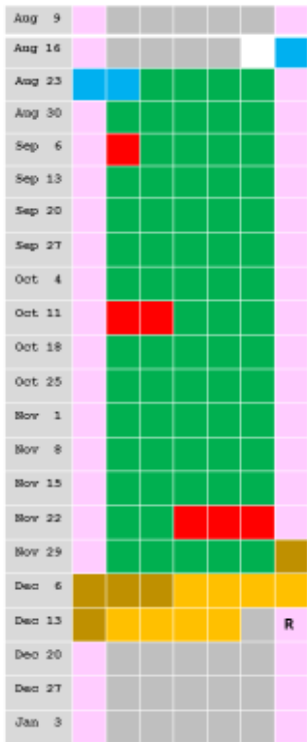
## 2025-26: Current Calendar



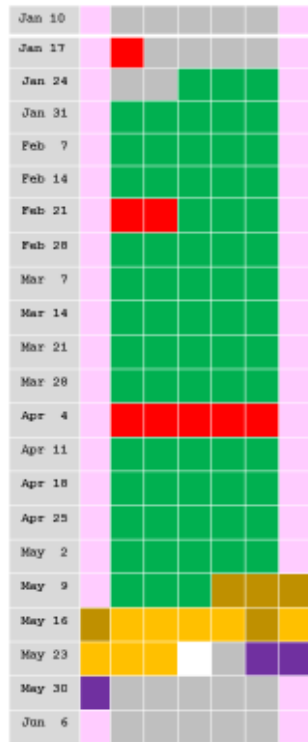
Between Semester Days = 33

Summer Days = 97  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

## 2026-27: Current Calendar

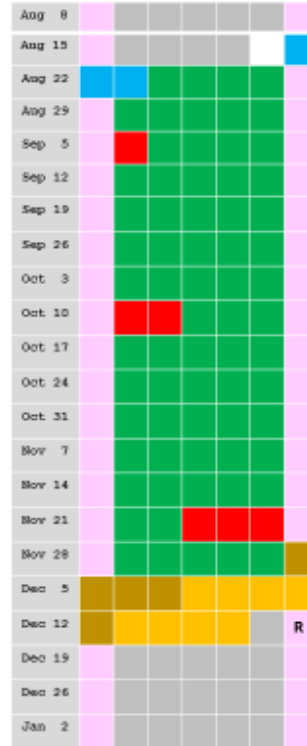


Between Semester Days = 40

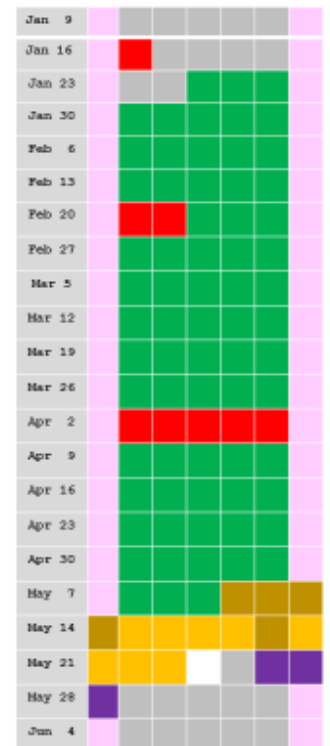


Summer Days = 90  
Summer Work Weeks = 12

## 2027-28: Current Calendar



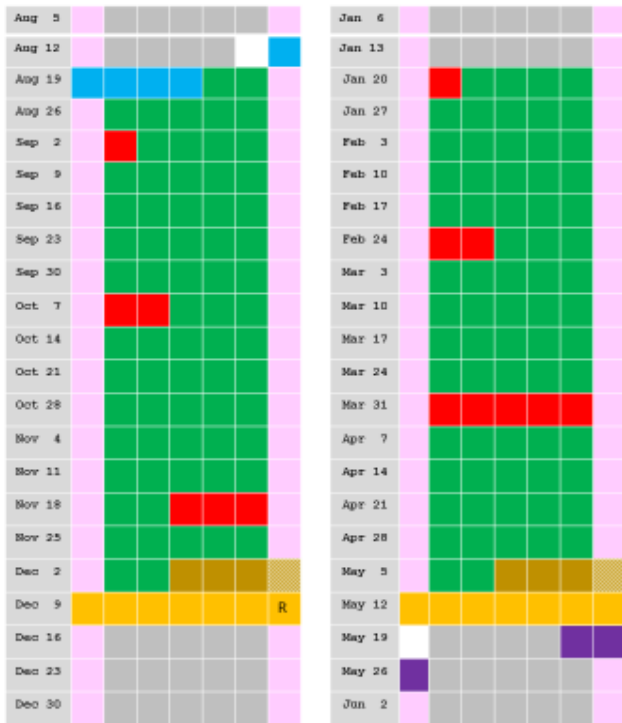
Between Semester Days = 40



Summer Days = 90  
Summer Work Weeks = 12

# Appendix 9. The Modified Current Calendar Through 2027-28

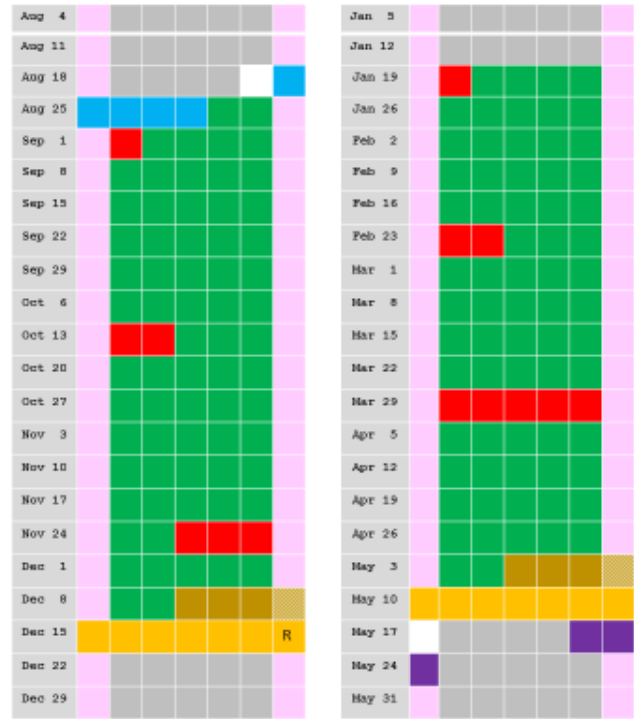
## 2018-19: Modified Current Calendar



Between Semester Days = 37

Summer Days = 102  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

## 2019-20: Modified Current Calendar

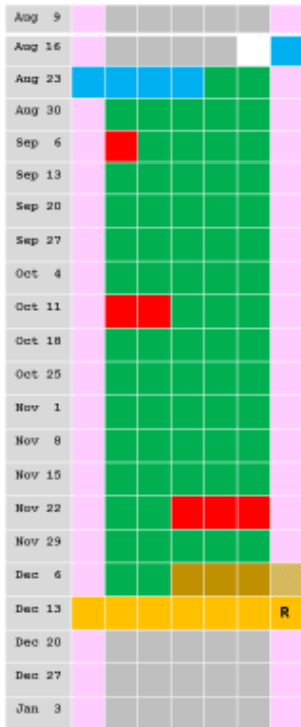


Between Semester Days = 30

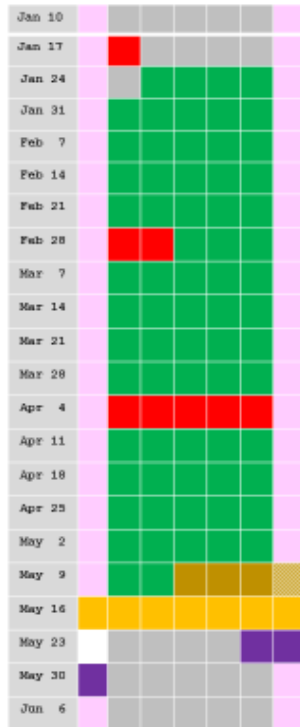
Summer Days = 102  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

### 2020-21: Modified Current Calendar

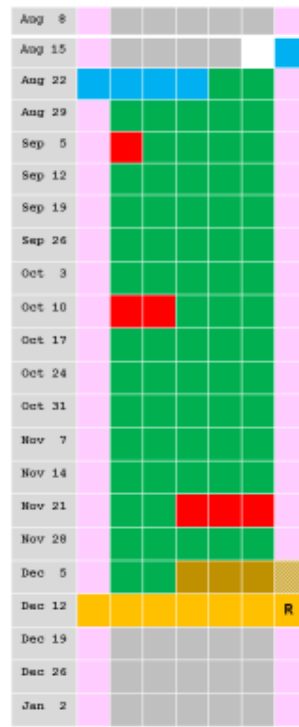
### 2021-22: Modified Current Calendar



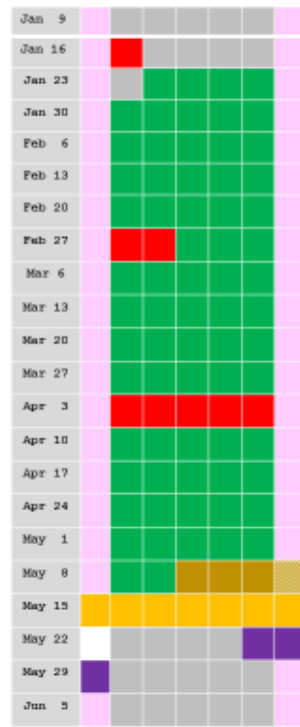
Between Semester Days = 37



Summer Days = 95  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

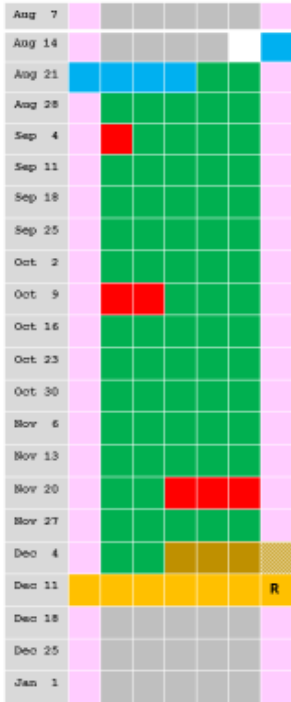


Between Semester Days = 37

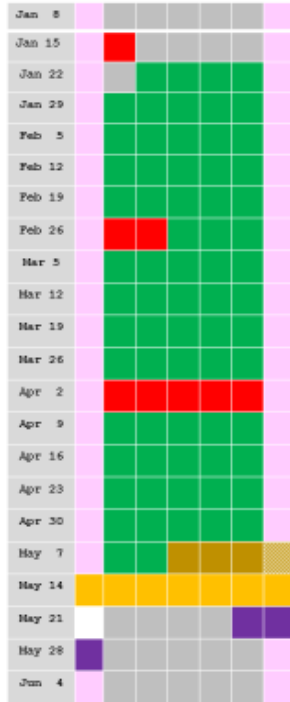


Summer Days = 95  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

### 2022-23: Modified Current Calendar

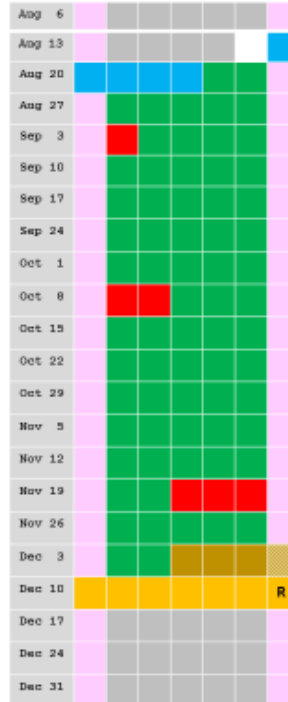


Between Semester Days - 37

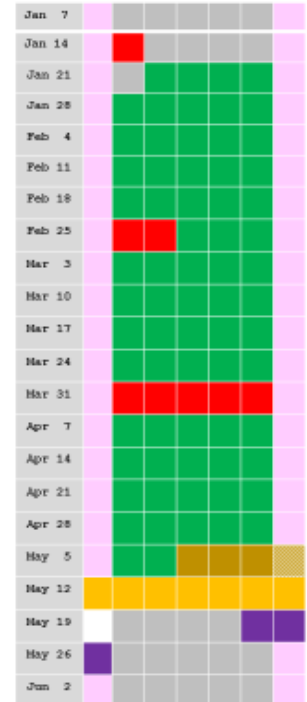


Summer Days - 95  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

### 2023-24: Modified Current Calendar

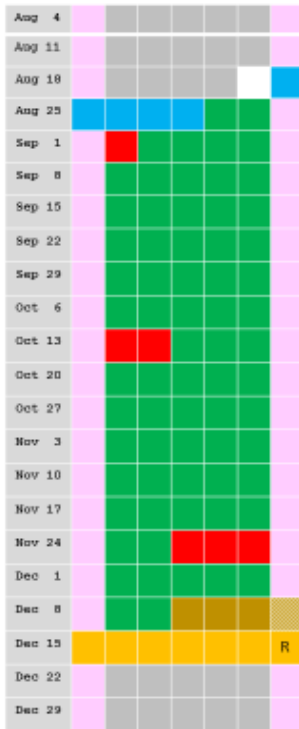


Between Semester Days - 37

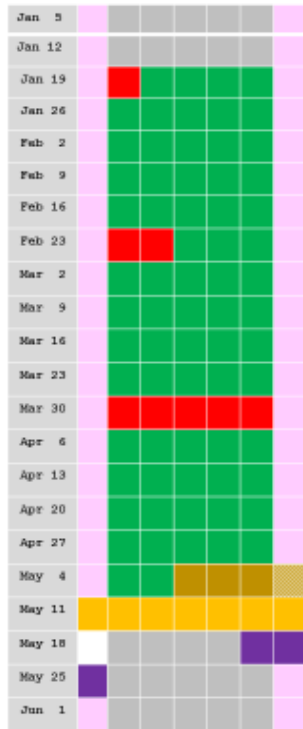


Summer Days - 102  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

## 2024-25: Modified Current Calendar

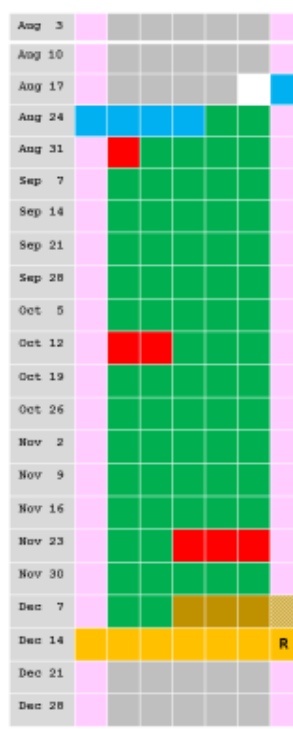


Between Semester Days = 30

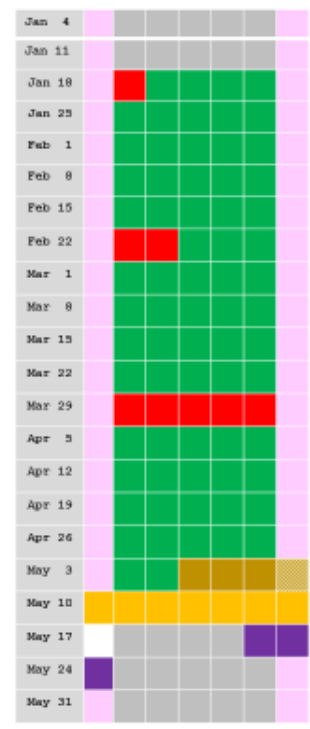


Summer Days = 102  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

## 2025-26: Modified Current Calendar



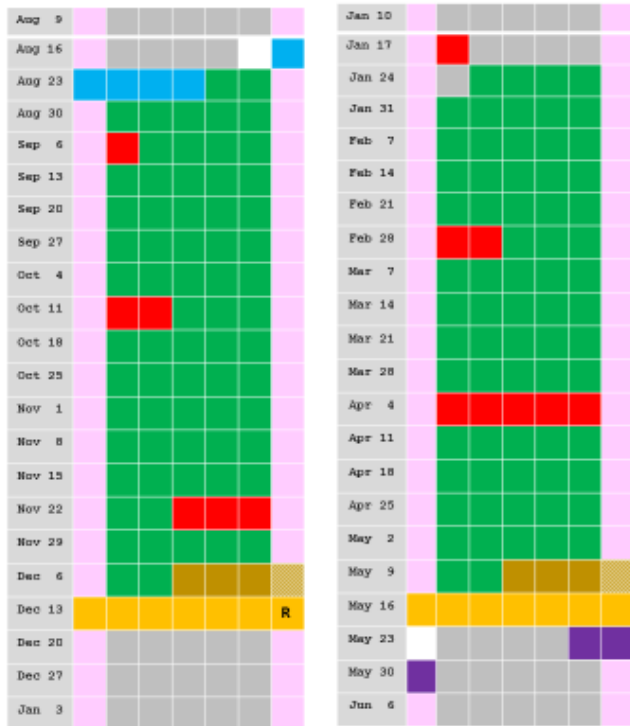
Between Semester Days = 30



Summer Days = 102  
Summer Work Weeks = 14



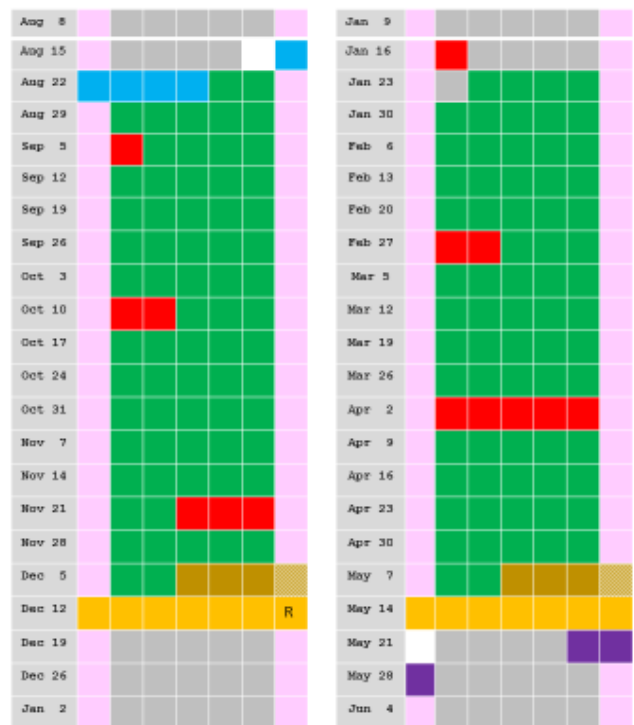
## 2026-27: Modified Current Calendar



Between Semester Days = 37

Summer Days = 95  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

## 2027-28: Modified Current Calendar



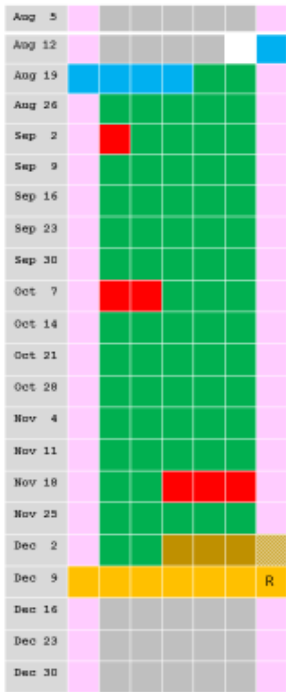
Between Semester Days = 37

Summer Days = 95  
Summer Work Weeks = 13

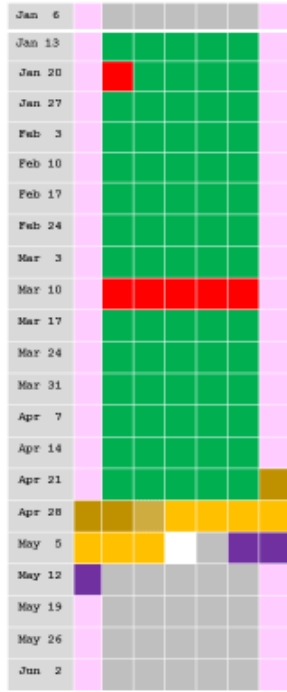
# Appendix 10. The Early Commencement Calendar Through 2027-28

## 2018-19: Early Commencement Calendar

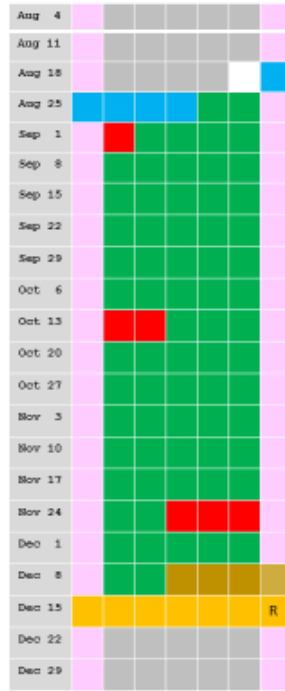
## 2019-20: Early Commencement Calendar



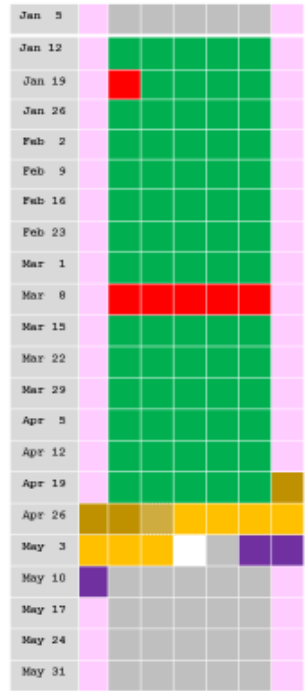
Between Semester Days - 29



Summer Days - 113  
Summer Work Weeks - 15

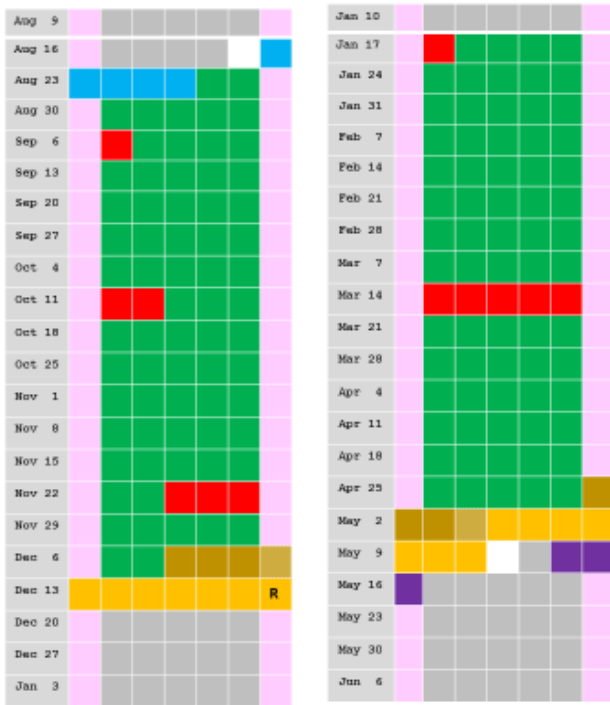


Between Semester Days - 22



Summer Days - 113  
Summer Work Weeks - 15

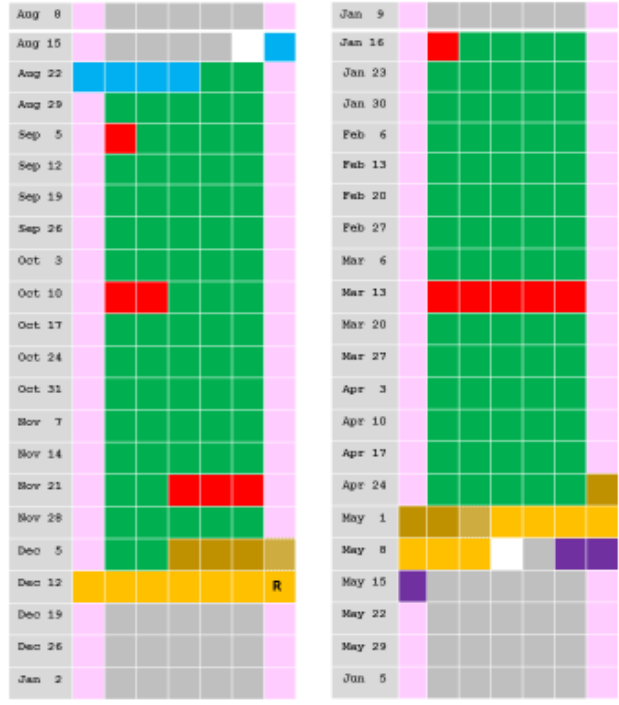
## 2020-21: Early Commencement Calendar



Between Semester Days = 30

Summer Days = 106  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

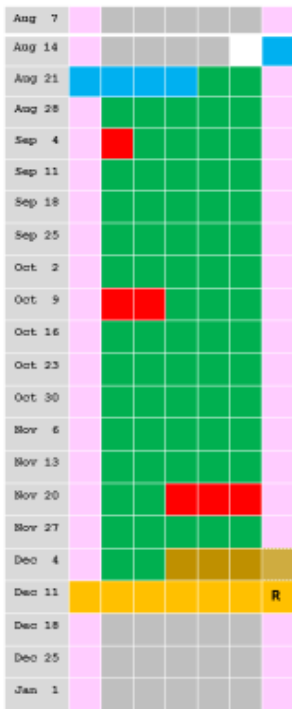
## 2021-22: Early Commencement Calendar



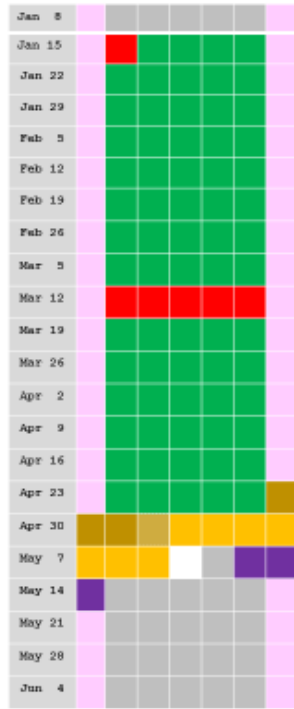
Between Semester Days = 30

Summer Days = 106  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

### 2022-23: Early Commencement Calendar

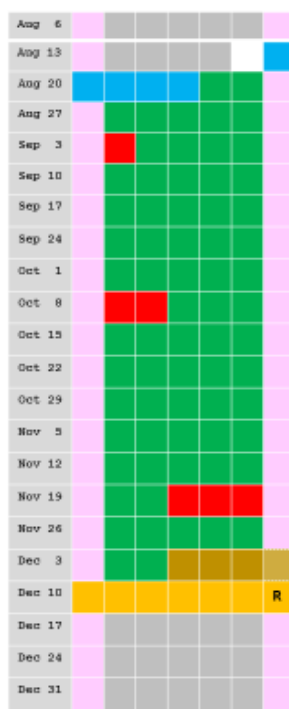


Between Semester Days = 30

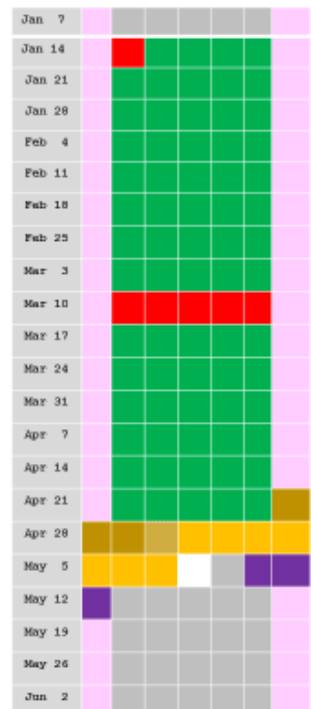


Summer Days = 106  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

### 2023-24: Early Commencement Calendar

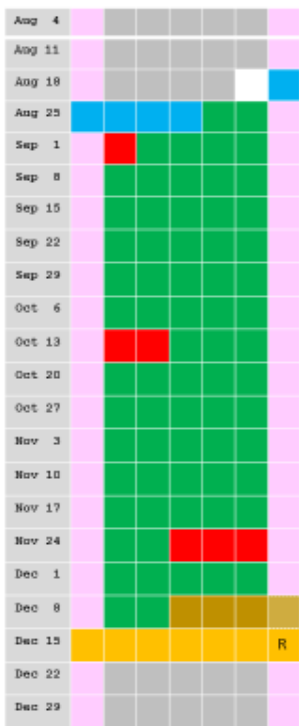


Between Semester Days = 30

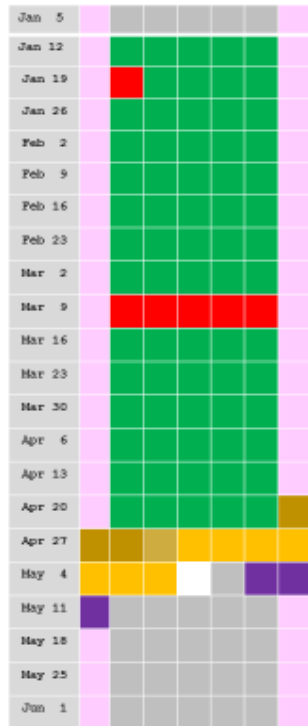


Summer Days = 113  
Summer Work Weeks = 15

## 2024-25: Early Commencement Calendar

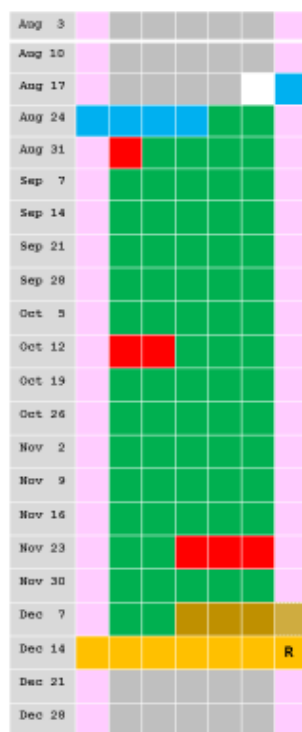


Between Semester Days = 22

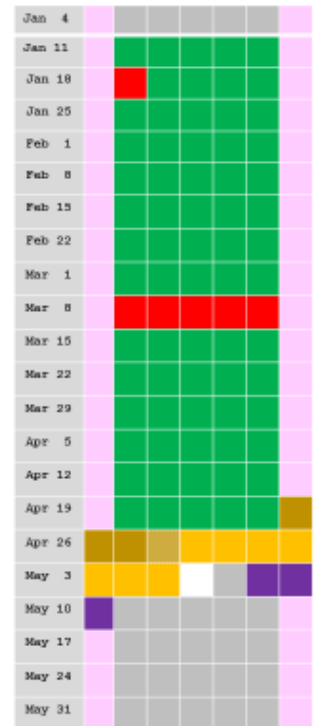


Summer Days = 113  
Summer Work Weeks = 15

## 2025-26: Early Commencement Calendar

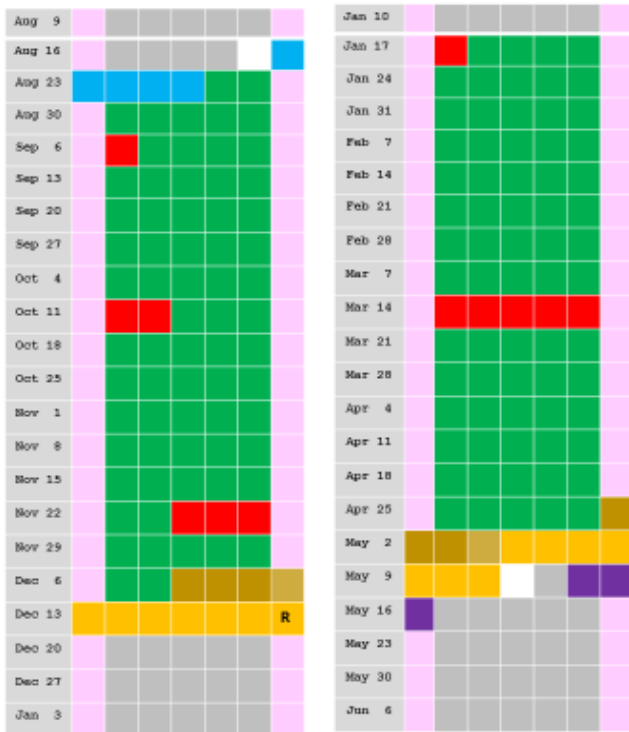


Between Semester Days = 22



Summer Days = 113  
Summer Work Weeks = 15

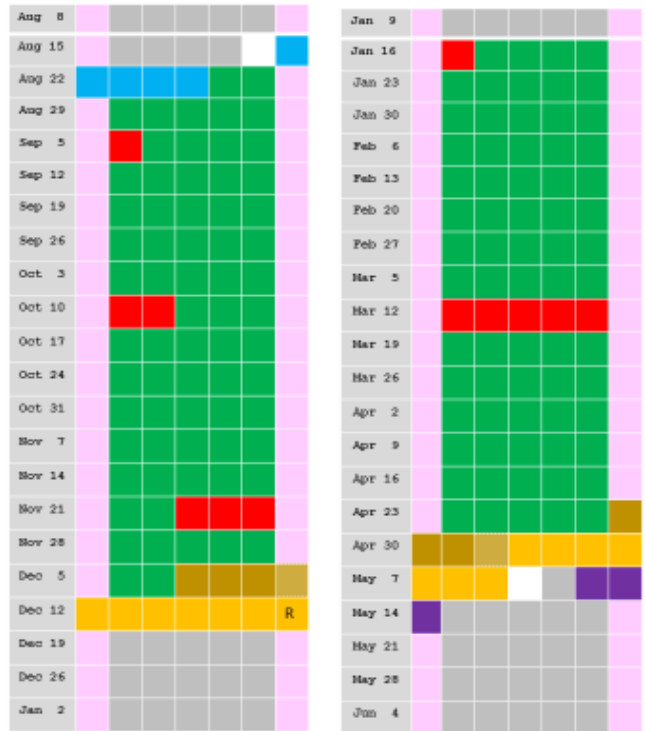
## 2026-27: Early Commencement Calendar



Between Semester Days - 30

Summer Days - 106  
Summer Work Weeks = 14

## 2027-28: Early Commencement Calendar



Between Semester Days - 30

Summer Days - 106  
Summer Work Weeks = 14