

University of Greenwich

Academic Calendar: Guidance Notes for Managers



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University Academic Framework focuses on responding to the needs of our students and is designed to maximise student opportunities, achievement and successes. It is recognised that student interests are best served by engagement with staff who are enthusiastic and operating at their best and that in this regard, student, staff and management interests are all aligned. The Framework also takes into account the overall strategy of the University and is instrumental in the achievement of these goals. At the same time, the University is committed to ensuring that all academic activities are carried out in accordance with the academic contract of employment and the Balanced Academic Workload Model, as agreed with the recognised trade union.
- 1.2 These guidance notes to the Academic Calendar aim to provide a framework to assist managers in the effective planning of academic activities within their respective areas, throughout the academic year.
- 1.3 Managers should ensure that, as the new Academic Calendar is introduced, colleagues are not disadvantaged in terms of their aggregate workload allocation or its distribution through the year. The Balanced Academic Workload model should be used in an open and transparent fashion to ensure that workloads are distributed fairly and equitably between colleagues. Within any department and school, the allocations of BAW points should be shared in transparent fashion to ensure equity and impartiality.

2. Working Year

The working year of academics (43 weeks after accounting for annual leave, public holidays and closure periods) is divided between two major types of activity:

- A period (five weeks) for research and scholarly activity which includes general subject or professional updating, attending conferences, writing papers etc in addition to any such activity that takes place throughout the year. Further time allocated for specific programmes of research is supplementary to this basic entitlement. Usually, most – if not all – of this five-week period for research and scholarly activity is taken in one or more blocks of time.
- Teaching-related activities which include all formal teaching and related preparation, marking and administration. This will not normally exceed 38 weeks, of which two weeks will be spent specifically on teaching-related administration. While some flexibility may be required in organising the teaching year, staff will not (except with prior agreement) be required to undertake more than 14 consecutive weeks of teaching, at any one time, and any significant variations to the normal pattern of the teaching year in the University will be made only after due process of consultation.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This document provides guidelines for managers who have staffing responsibilities within a Faculty or department.
- 3.2 It refers only to staff on an Academic Contract of employment and is not relevant for staff on any other tenure.
- 3.3 The guidelines contained within this document must be used in accordance with the National Contract which is the final reference document in this context.

4 Benefits

- 4.1 The existence of guidance notes that assist in the effective planning of staff resources will help to ensure that the university provides the best service and support to students and staff.
- 4.2 A clear and transparent outline of the university academic activities across the academic year will support staff in planning annual leave and research activities and thus establish a good work-life balance.
- 4.3 To this end, the calendar will be published well in advance - before June of the academic year before the year to which it relates - and will show as a minimum: term dates; dates of main teaching programmes in each School/Faculty; induction weeks; revision weeks (if any); main examination periods and potential dates for Progression boards; closure dates; student self study periods.
- 4.4 Additionally, there are two weeks for teaching-related administration which will be allocated, after consultation with staff, by the Head of Department and published in advance, normally very shortly after publication of the calendar.

5. The Use of the Academic Calendar within the University

This document should be consulted in the following circumstances:

5.1 *When agreeing annual leave*

The timing of staff holidays is subject to the agreement of the Head of Department. Subject to the organisational requirements of the University, a member of staff may request that up to 6 weeks of his/her normal holiday entitlement be taken in one continuous period, and such a request will not be unreasonably refused.

While some academic staff undertake duties during the summer, most take substantial blocks of leave and time for RSA over the summer period. The University will continue to honour custom and practice where this is the case. This consideration, together with the provisions of the National Contract

regarding continuous periods of leave, should be included by managers in their allocation of work and annual leave for the summer period each year. Managers should use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that all members of staff who have customarily taken blocks of annual leave over the summer period remain able to do so; this is especially important for those staff with caring responsibilities.

Members of staff are also entitled to request blocks of leave/ RSA at other times of year but understand that it may be more difficult to accommodate

Where leave /RSA has been agreed in term time, it is the responsibility of the manager – after consultation with the staff member - to ensure that duties are covered. Members of staff may also request shorter periods of leave, including a single day but managers should note that they cannot be *required* to use up leave allowances as single days or during term time generally.

Where possible, lecturers will indicate the periods in which they would like to take leave when work allocation for the year ahead is discussed in order to facilitate planning of duties. Detailed holiday schedules for individual lecturers will be made as soon as reasonably practicable after the beginning of each academic year; in determining holiday schemes, special regard will be given to lecturers with caring responsibilities, religious requirements or relevant adjustments for disabilities and those who wish to attend conferences or courses that are held in normal holiday periods.

Exceptionally, should it ever be necessary to refuse a request for leave, the member of staff concerned will receive priority in the allocation of leave in subsequent periods.

Managers and staff are reminded of the need to record annual leave.

5.2 When planning teaching-related administration weeks within the academic year (2 weeks)

Such weeks should be agreed and clearly designated for each member of staff.

5.3 When allocating teaching hours, revision weeks or student self-study sessions.

Wherever possible managers should ensure that staff time is fully deployed within two of the three terms of the year.

Whereas the autumn and spring terms are usually dedicated to teaching, the summer period is largely – but not exclusively – dedicated to research and scholarly activity or to staff leave. Requirements such as those for dissertation supervision are usually fitted around such activities. Managers should pay due regard to this existing pattern (see 4.1) when allocating work and teaching administration weeks. In this regard, any additional teaching requirements in the summer introduced after June 2013 will not constitute operational requirements sufficient to refuse requests for leave before meaningful consultation involving the recognised Unions, where appropriate, has occurred.

Revision sessions in the student self-study periods are voluntary. However, where it has been agreed locally that revision sessions will take place, a single week should be designated for these classes, normally the week immediately following the end of teaching or the week immediately prior to the resumption of term, and care shall be taken to avoid scheduling 'revision weeks' in school holidays. The University will use all reasonable endeavours to accommodate the school holidays that may be relevant, recognising the requirements of both students and staff.

In planning revision weeks and student self-study weeks, there should also be a period without teaching between terms – corresponding to school holidays as far as possible – in order to facilitate RSA or periods of leave for staff and to allow for contractual limitations on the number of consecutive teaching weeks. While recognising that rapid feedback to students is important, it should also be recognised that breaks between terms are often used for staff leave and / or RSA. When setting deadlines for the return of student assessments and other activities, due regard should be paid to the need to facilitate such activities.

5.4 When agreeing scholarly and research activities

While it is in the nature of research and scholarly activity that it may take place throughout the year and be integrated into the overall pattern of academic activities, it is envisaged that normally the period(s) of the year outside normal teaching weeks and holiday entitlement will primarily be devoted to research and scholarly activity. Staff research and scholarly activity will be principally self-managed. These activities and their relationship with the member of staff's other duties and activities should be discussed as part of the staff appraisal and development system, under which objectives for the forthcoming year or other appropriate period can be agreed and achievements over the past year can be assessed. Members of staff are entitled to take the allocated time for research and scholarly activity in a block, in order to achieve the objectives agreed and managers should take active steps to facilitate this.

The Academic Calendar and the Balanced Academic Workload Model should be used together when planning departmental activities. It is acknowledged that in a limited number of programmes there are external factors that significantly affect the academic calendar but the spirit and principles of these guidelines should be applied overall.

Agreed after consultation between University of Greenwich and UCU
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